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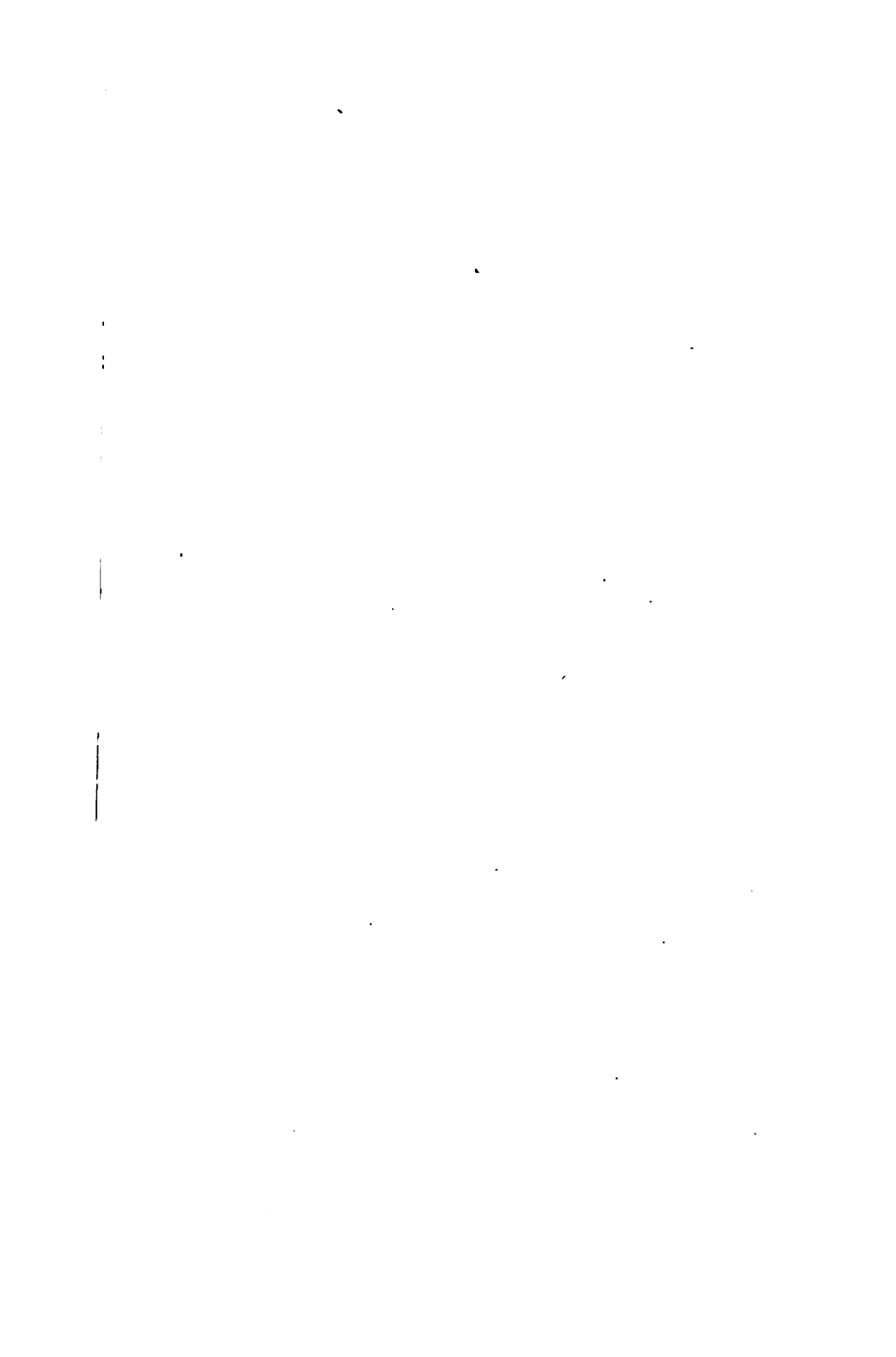
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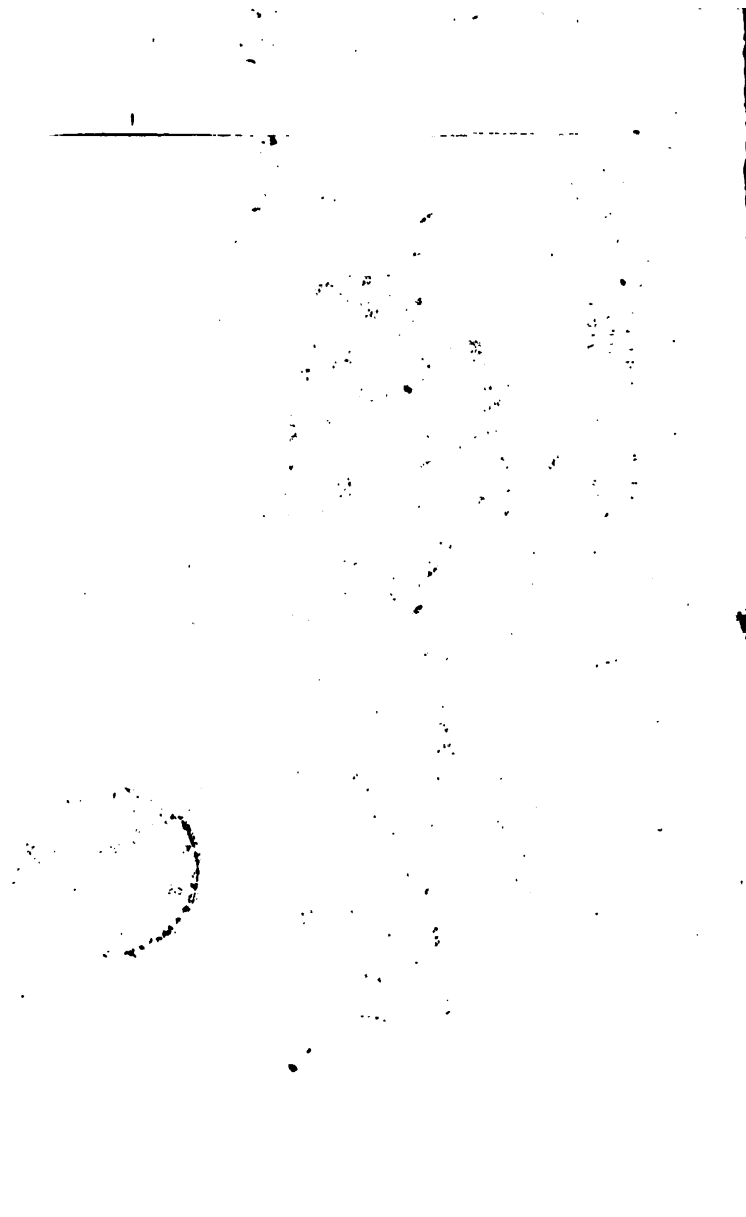


Silas stopped his horses, and unharnessing them, placed them at one end of the waggon, while we secured our steeds at the other end. A few boxes and bales which the waggon contained, with some stout poles ready in case of necessity to repair it, were tumbled out, and with them we formed a very imperfect barricade for our defence.

CLAY H. G. FORTSON,

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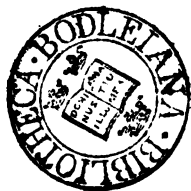
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THE
PERILS AND ADVENTURES
OF
HARRY SKIPWITH
BY SEA AND LAND.

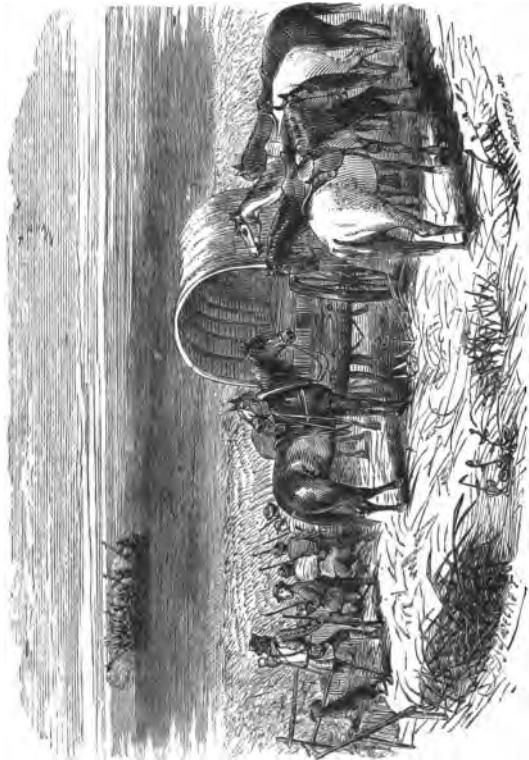
BY
WILLIAM H. G. KINGSTON,
AUTHOR OF "TRUE BLUE;" "FOXHOLME HALL;" "THE PIRATE'S
TREASURE," ETC. ETC.

With Thirty-five Illustrations.



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CHAPTER VI.

	PAGE
On they come—Order of Battle—Numbers prevail—Ready and Peter save my Scalp—Unlooked-for Aid—Our Wounds are dressed—Shelter on the Verge of Civilization	61

CHAPTER VII.

Our Deliverers pursue the Comanches, but fail to return—I am Convalescent and head a Party in Search—There is a Lady in the Case—Stores for Camp—Tony Flack's Tale of the "Injuns"	71
--	----

CHAPTER VIII.

Our Friends besieged—We surprise the Comanches—Our Victory, and our Friends relieved—What they had suffered—The young Girl restored to her Home	79
---	----

CHAPTER IX.

I determine to return to New Orleans—A drunken Captain—Sam Snag, the Mulatto Mate—A Hurricane and Wreck—A Night of Horrors	89
--	----

CHAPTER X.

I cling to a part of the Wreck, and am tossed in the Sea—Peter and Ready are also saved—I improvise a Raft, and get Peter and Ready aboard—We reach an uninhabited Island—Sam Snag and another also reach Land—Friends or Foes?—Water! Water!—We land a Cask and find it Claret—Ready discovers a Spring—The Mate wants Meat, and means to eat us	103
---	-----

CHAPTER XI.

A Skrimmage for Life—A Truce—A Sail, a Sail appears—Marcus to the Rescue—The Pirate takes us off—Sam Snag's fearful End	117
---	-----

CHAPTER XII.

The Pirate and the Man-of-war—The Chase—A Calm—Fatal Security—The Pirate blown up—We are captured—In Lieutenant Trevor of the Spitfire I find a dear old	
--	--

CONTENTS.

v

	PAGE
Friend, and a way of serving Marcus, who regains his Liberty—We arrive at Havannah	126

CHAPTER XIII.

From Cuba to New Orleans, and hence up the Mississippi on to St. Louis—Our Voyage up the Ohio—Kentucky Shots—Cincinnati—Away to Toronto—The Hudson's Bay Company's Territory described	138
--	-----

CHAPTER XIV.

From Toronto to the Pacific—Jack Trevor, an old Chum, for Fellow-traveller—From Collingwood by Steamer—Birch-bark Canoes—Lake Superior and Thunder Bay—Fort William to Lake Winnipeg—The Kaministiquia—Swiftfoot, our Indian Guide, and Half-caste Crew—A Portage—Our Camp and Progress—Missionaries and Settlers—Fort Garry and Selkirk Settlements	152
--	-----

CHAPTER XV.

We get up a Buffalo Hunt—We engage Stalker and Garoupe, two Half-caste Hunters—Pemmican—The Hunt—I get Floored by a huge Bison, but am carried to Camp in his Skin—Hostile Sioux, and a Brush with them—We cross the Assiniboine—La Prairie Portage	168
---	-----

CHAPTER XVI.

Animals of the Wilderness—The Sioux again—An Encampment of Cree Indians—Buffalo Pounds—To the Red River	176
---	-----

CHAPTER XVII.

High state of Cultivation of Settlements—Rupert's Land—The Rapids—Lake Winnipeg—Our Bivouac—Peter nearly "drowned and dead"—How we caught Fish—The Swampies, and their mode of Fishing—An Ojibway Missionary Station—The Salt Springs—Pas Mission—Fort à la Carne	184
---	-----

CHAPTER XVIII.

The Winter in Camp—Our Log-house and Huts—Hunting	
---	--

	PAGE
and Fishing—Buffalo Stalking—Supper and a Dance, and Supper again—How we fared in Camp—Indian Stalking—Winter Pastime	202

CHAPTER XIX.

Across the Rocky Mountains—The Saskatchewan—A Co- racle, and how to make it—Fort Edmonton—Encounter with a Grizzly—A Banquet in the Wood—We are joined by a Party of Seven	220
---	-----

CHAPTER XX.

Habakkuk Gaby is hugged by a Grizzly—A Rattlesnake follows suit—The Rocky Mountains—The Frazer River —We form Three Exploring Parties—I construct a Raft, and what followed—All Safe at Last	230
---	-----

CHAPTER XXI.

The Thompson River—Our Parties re-unite—Hippoph- agous Stores—Indian Revenge—We build a Raft and two Canoes—The Rapids, and our Dangers—Indians in Ambush	241
--	-----

CHAPTER XXII.

We send out Scouts—We pass the Rapids—Swiftfoot re- turns alone—Indians surround us—A War Party burn our vacated Camp—Quick-ear, pursued by Indians, arrives—We build more Canoes—Reach Fort St. George	253
--	-----

CHAPTER XXIII.

Richfield, the Capital of Cariboo—The Diggings—Habakkuk sets up a Store—Engages Peter for a time—Arrive at Victoria—Lord Milton and Dr. Cheadle	261
---	-----

CHAPTER XXIV.

Voyage to San Francisco—The City and Diggings—We book our passage for Honolulu—Marcus warns me of Danger, and the idea is abandoned—We return to Eng- land <i>via</i> New York—Marcus sails for Liberia, and we spend Christmas with Aunt Becky	272
---	-----

ILLUSTRATIONS.

	PAGE
FRONTISPICE: A Brush with Comanche Indians.	
Not always what we seem	1
The Alligator	13
A Struggle for Life with Marcus the Slave	18
Marcus fights for Liberty, and wins	29
"The Wondrous Highflier"	40
Landed and Stranded	53
Two Skulls in the Prairie	61
A Loghouse Farm	71
The Hill Fort	79
"The Weathercock" at Sea	89
The Wreck	103
A Sail in the Offing	117
Her Majesty's Frigate "Spitfire"	126
Up the Ohio	138
Our Birch-bark Canoe	152
Swiftfoot, the Redskin Guide	158
The Buffalo	168

	PAGE
Animals of the Wilderness	176
The Locust	177
The Masque-along Pike	178
Rapids on the Red River	184
Sturgeon, Shad, and Bass	187
The Buzzard	194
Winter in Camp	202
The Loon	214
The Wolverine	219
Fort Edmonton	220
The Coracle	222
The Rocky Mountains	230
The Rattlesnake	234
The Thompson River	241
Rapids in the River	253
At Vancouver Island	261
Off for San Francisco	272



PERILS AND ADVENTURES
OF
HARRY SKIPWITH.

CHAPTER I.

MY FIRST ADVENTURE—PROGRAMME OF TRAVEL—OFF ACROSS THE ATLANTIC—THE MISSISSIPPI—HOW WE GOT ENAGGED—I SAVE PETER ROBERTS—THE CAYMAN'S COMPANY—THE ISLAND REFUGE.

THE love of travel was a family instinct, and was born with me. My maternal grandfather went to Central Africa—at least, he left us intending to do so, but

never came back again. I had a great uncle who voyaged three times round the world, and one sailor uncle who, half a century ago, spent a winter at the North Pole along with Parry and Franklin. Then I had a cousin who was very ambitious of reaching the moon, and spent his life in studying its maps and making preparations for the journey, which, however, he never accomplished. When asked when he was going to start, he always replied that he had deferred his journey for six months—circumstances requiring his longer sojourn on this planet Tellus; but he never expressed the slightest doubt about his being able ultimately to accomplish his proposed journey. I held him in great respect (which was more than any of the rest of the family did); but as my ambition never soared beyond an expedition round this sublunary globe, I resolved as soon as possible to commence my travels in the hopes of having the start of him.

My voluntary studies were of a character to feed my taste. The travels of the famed Baron Munchausen, "Gulliver's Travels," those of Sir John Mandeville and Marco Polo, were read by me over and over again. I procured others of a more modern date, and calculated to give more correct information regarding the present state of the world; but I stuck to my old friends, and pictured the globe to myself much in the condition in which they described it. Not having the patience to wait till I grew up, I resolved at the commencement of my summer holidays to start by myself, hoping to come back before their termination, having a full supply of adventures to narrate. I was some days maturing my plans and making preparations for my journey. I had denied myself such luxuries as had been brought to our school by the pieman, and had

saved up my pocket-money—an exercise of self-denial which proved the earnestness of my resolve. I had had too several presents made to me by relations and friends who happened to be in the house. I paid a visit also to my cousin, Booby Skipwith, as he was called. I did not confide to him all my plans; but I hinted that I had one of great importance in hand, and, to my great delight, he presented me with a five-pound note, observing that he believed that such things were not current in the moon, and that, therefore, he could dispense with them. I hinted that if such was the case he might hand me out a few more, for that where I was going they would be greatly in demand; but it proved that this was the only one of which he was possessed.

I had got a small portmanteau, into which I packed all my best clothes and valuables, with a few glass beads and knives which I had purchased to bestow on any savages I might encounter. I had a lance-head brought home by my great uncle. With this I purposed manufacturing a lance for my defence. I knew that, as England is an island, I must cross the water. My idea, when on the other side, whether north, south, east, or west I did not care, was to purchase two steeds—one for myself and another for my luggage and a squire, whom I intended to find. I was certain that he would turn up somewhere, and be very faithful and brave. The first, thing, however, was to get away from home. I wrote an affectionate letter to my father, telling him that I was going on my travels as my ancestor had done, and that I should be back, I hoped, by the end of the holidays; that if I was not, it could not much signify, as I should be gaining more information from my intercourse with the great world

than I could possibly hope to reap from the instruction of Dr. Bumpus.

This done, one very fine morning I crept out of the house with my portmanteau on my shoulders, and getting over the park palings, so as not to be seen by the lodge-keeper, I stood ready for a coach that would pass by, I had ascertained, about that time. I waited anxiously, thinking that it must have already passed. At last I saw it coming along the road in a cloud of dust. I hailed it in a knowing way, handed up my portmanteau to be placed by the coachman in the boot under his feet, and climbing up behind in a twinkling before any questions were asked, away we bowled at a famous rate. "All right," I thought; "I am now fairly off on my travels." We had twenty miles to get to the railway station. Once in the train, I should be beyond pursuit. I had no fear of that, however. I should not be missed for some hours, and then no one would know in what direction I had gone.

We approached the station near Burton. My heart throbbed with eagerness. In a few minutes the train would be starting. The coach stopped before the hotel. At that a moment a gentleman on horseback was passing. He saw me before I had time to hide my face.

"Why, Harry, where are you going?" he exclaimed. It was my uncle, Roland Skipwith, the arctic voyager. He looked into the coach, expecting to see some one. "What, are you all alone? Where are you going, boy?"

"On my travels, uncle," I answered, boldly, hoping that he might approve of my purpose, seeing that he was himself a great traveller. "You will not stop me, I know."

"We'll see about that," he answered, in a tone I did not quite like. "Get down, youngster. I'll give you a little advice on the subject. You can't go by this train, that's certain."

While I reluctantly obeyed, he inquired of Tomkins, the coachman, how he came to bring me away from home. Tomkins apologised—thought that I was going on a visit to my aunt, Miss Rebecca Skipwith, who lived at Burton, and finished by handing out my portmanteau, and receiving my fare to Burton in exchange.

I was sold, that was clear enough. The portmanteau was deposited in the bar till the coach would return soon after noon.

"Come along," said my uncle, who had given his horse to the hostler. "I have ridden over to breakfast with your Aunt Rebecca, so we'll hear what she has to say on the matter."

I felt rather foolish as he took my hand and led me away.

We soon reached Aunt Becky's neat trim mansion. My uncle had time to say a few words to her before she saw me. She received me with her usual cordiality, for I was somewhat of a pet of hers. I was desperately hungry, and was soon seated at a table well spread with all sorts of appetizing luxuries. My uncle, after a little time, when I had taken the edge off my hunger, began to question me as to my proposed plans, to an account of which he and Aunt Becky listened with profound gravity. I began to hope that he was going to approve of them, till suddenly he burst out laughing heartily. Aunt Becky joined him. I found that they had been hoaxing me. I was sold again. This was the last attempt I made during that period of my existence to commence my travels.

On arriving at manhood, and having just quitted college and had an independence left me, the desire once more came strongly on me to see the world—not the fashionable world, as an infinitesimal portion of the human race delight to call themselves, but the great big round globe, covered with our fellow-creatures of varied colours, languages, customs, and religions.

“Good-bye, Aunt Becky! I really and truly am off this time,” I exclaimed, as I rushed into my dear, good old aunt’s drawing-room at Burton, she looking as neat and trim as ever, being the perfection of nice old-maidenism, not a whit older than when, some thirteen years before, I had been brought there a prisoner by my uncle.

“Where are you going to, my dear?” asked Aunt Becky, lifting up her spectacles from her nose with a look of surprise.

“Oh, only just across the Atlantic, to take a run up and down North and South America, as a kind of experiment before I attempt a tour, by land and water, to China and Japan, and home again by way of Australia, New Zealand, and Tahiti, by the Panama route, which I mean to do some of these days.”

“Well, well,” said Aunt Becky, “you are a true Skipwith, and if that Captain Grant hadn’t got the start of you, I suppose you would have discovered the source of the Nile and the snow mountains under the equator, and, like Hercules, in that gem on my finger, which I wear for the sake of an old friend, have come home with a lion’s skin across your shoulder, or dressed up like an ape, as Monsieur de Chaillu did sometime ago. However, I shall wish, Harry, if you ever want an additional hundred pounds or so, draw on me; I have always some spare cash at the banker’s. But

you'll never come back if you attempt half you talk of doing. You'll be scalped by Indians, or roasted and eaten by other savages; or be tossed by buffaloes, or lost in the snow; or be blown up in one of those dreadful American steamers, which seem to do nothing else; or you'll catch a fever, or be cast away on a desolate island, and we shall never hear anything more of you; or something else dreadful will happen to you, I am certain."

"Never mind, Aunt Becky; I shall be embalmed in your memory, at all events," I answered; "and besides, I am going to have a companion to look after me."

"Who can he be who would venture to accompany such a harum-scarum fellow as you are, Harry?" said my aunt, looking more satisfied.

"One who has ever proved faithful, aunt: his name is Ready."

"Why, he's your dog, Harry!" she exclaimed, disappointed.

"Could I have a more trustworthy and, at the same time, active and intelligent follower?" I asked. "I had thought of taking Bunbry" (he was my father's old butler, and remarkable for his obesity and laziness); "but you see, aunt, in the first place, my father could not spare him; and, in the second, he could not exactly keep up with me on a day's march of thirty or forty miles, and would certainly be nowhere when chasing wild buffaloes, or hunting panthers or grizzly bears. So I gave up the idea of having a servant at all; and as for a friend, I don't happen to be supplied with one ready to go, and I hope to find plenty on the way."

Having at length consoled Aunt Becky, by assuring,

her that I would take very good care of myself, and promising to bring her home trophies from all the lands I should visit, I gave her a parting kiss, in return for her blessing, and a few days afterwards I found myself, with Liverpool astern, sailing down the Mersey on board the good ship *Liberty*, bound for New Orleans, which the people on board pronounced New Orle-e-ens.

The striped and starry banner waved over our heads. "There, now, that's the flag of flags," said the skipper, pointing to it. "You Britishers talk of your flag which has 'braved a thousand years the battle and the breeze,' but I guess that flag of ours will be flying proudly in every quarter of the globe when your old obsolete government will have come to a consummate smash." He looked so savage at me, that Ready would have flown at his leg, had I not held him back.

I was determined not to be put out of temper, so I answered quietly—

"Now, captain, I should be very happy to suppose that your stars and stripes will fly to the end of the world; but I do not see why the banner of old England should not be allowed to wave as long. There's room for both of us, surely. It's my principle to live and let live."

"Why, stranger, because you are not a nation of free men, you don't know what true liberty is," he replied, gnashing his teeth in a way which made Ready show his in return.

"Our old obsolete government showed that it appreciated liberty when, at a vast cost, it knocked off the shackles from every slave owned by a Briton," I observed, calmly.

"I guess you'd better not touch on that there subject,

stranger, when you get to New Orle-e-ens, or Judge Lynch may have a word to say to you," croaked out the skipper, curling his nose, and giving a malicious wink at me while he squirted a stream of tobacco juice into the eye of poor Ready, who went howling round the deck with pain.

I took the hint, and held my tongue on the dark subject. It's ill to talk of the gallows to a man whose father has been hung, and none but a Knight of La Mancha runs a tilt against windmills when travelling in foreign lands. Still, I say, do not do at Rome as Rome does, but protest, if not loudly, silently—by your conduct—against vice and immorality, and all the abominations you may meet with.

We had a large number of emigrants on board, who were fully persuaded that they were going to enjoy not only the most perfect government under the sun, but every blessing this world can supply. Poor people! how different did they find the reality. We kept to the southward of that mighty stream which, coming out of the Gulf of Mexico, sweeps away north, across the Atlantic, and, with its well-heated waters, adds considerably to the warmth of our shores at home. We saw neither floating icebergs, whales, nor sea serpents, but had several births and deaths, and at last made the island of St. Thomas, which appeared floating like a blue cloud on the ocean. As we drew nearer, a vast mountain rose before us, seemingly, directly out of the water, having a sterile summit, sprinkled round with spots of refreshing verdure. The harbour is in the form of an amphitheatre, and the land round, with its glittering white town on three hills, its old fort advancing into the sea, its green valleys, groves of cocoa-nuts, and fields of sugar-cane, is a highly picturesque spot. We put in

to get a supply of water, fruit, vegetables, and fresh provisions; but, as the yellow fever was at the time carrying off about twenty of the inhabitants a day, negroes and mulattoes as well as white people, I was satisfied with admiring its beauties at a distance. Putting to sea again as fast as we could, we weathered the north-western point of Cuba, and entered the Gulf of Mexico, between that island and Florida.

About a week afterwards vast numbers of logs of wood, floating in yellow water, indicated that we were at the mouths of the Mississippi, for, of course, a mighty stream a thousand miles long, would not be content with one mouth, like our poor little humble Thames. The scenery, consisting of mud-banks and swamps, as far as the eye can reach, is not very attractive. It is curious to look back after making numerous windings, and to observe the sea over the mud banks, considerably lower than the water on which the ship is floating. With a fair wind stemming the stream for a hundred and thirty miles, we found ourselves amid a crowd of vessels of all nations off New Orleans, the capital of Louisiana. It is a large handsome looking city, but, as the ground on which it stands is lower than the surface of the river, I could not help feeling, while I was there, that some night I might find myself washed out of my bed by its muddy waters.

Intending to return to New Orleans, I left my traps at my hotel, and embarked with Ready on board a huge steamer bound up the Mississippi. A cockney might describe her as like a Thames wherry with an omnibus on the top of it, and vast paddles outside all. I found that passengers could only ascend to the upper saloon, which ran the whole length of the vessel, the roof being of necessity sacred to the officers and crew.

There were numerous galleries, however, on each side of the paddle-boxes, and forward and aft, whence I could observe the scenery. It was not very attractive, consisting chiefly of low swamps—the habitations of alligators and rattlesnakes. Here and there were more elevated spots, on which villages were perched, and patches where once the forest grew, but which were now covered with fields of sugar-cane, maize, and cotton bushes.

We were dashing on at a prodigious rate—I fancy the engineer must have been sitting on the safety-valve—when, feeling a dreadful concussion, and being thrown forward with my nose on the deck, I heard those around me exclaim, “Snagged! We are sinking!” A snag is a log of timber stuck sloping in the mud. Against one of these snags we had run. Down, down sank the huge machine. “Aunt Becky forgot to mention this, among the other modes of losing my life which she enumerated,” I thought to myself. “She forgot that Mississippi steamers could sink as well as blow up.” However, I had no intention of going out of the world just then, if I could help it.

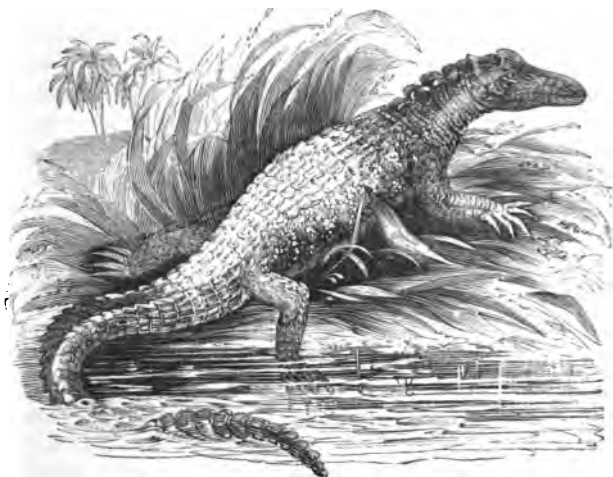
The river was at that part very wide and shallow; but I observed an island not far off, and I hoped to reach it. If there were any boats round the vessel, there was no time to lower them. The awful plunge came. Some hundred human beings were hurled amid the turbid waters. Many were carried down with the vessel; others were shrieking piteously, and struggling for life. The weather was intensely hot. I had on but little clothing. I struck out towards the island. As I did so, the thought occurred to me, “For what purpose was my great strength given me? Surely to be of use to my fellow-creatures. I can save one of

these poor people at all events." I turned back. The first person I saw was a poor lad, who had been my fellow-passenger on board the *Liberty*. I had more than once spoken to him. His name was Peter. "Help, help!" he shrieked out. "Oh, Mr. Skipwith, save me." I caught him by the collar, and threw him on to my back. "There, Peter," said I, "cling on, but don't touch my arms, and, with Heaven's support, I'll carry you on shore." The lad made no answer, but did as I bade him, and away Ready and I swam towards the island. I cannot forget the shrieks and cries for help of the unfortunate beings drowning round me. Now an arm was lifted up; now two hands in the attitude of supplication. Now the countenance of some strong man full of horror and despair came into view. Women and children were floating about, held up for a while by their clothes, and others were clinging to chairs, and stools, and bits of the wreck, which had risen to the surface. I felt many clutch at me. A sad necessity compelled me to shake them off. I should have endangered Peter's life, as well as my own, had I attempted to help them.

It was no easy work. The current was strong, and there were eddies which whirled me round and round, while Mississippi's muddy waters were less buoyant than those of the ocean. The island for which I was making was lower down than where the steamer had struck, or I doubt if I should have been saved. As I approached the bank, I saw that there were numerous reeds fringing it, which I doubted if I could penetrate. Still the attempt must be made. I looked about, till I saw a space which appeared more clear, and I swam at it to force my way through. The reeds seemed to grow thicker and thicker. It became

very heavy work, and I feared that I should get my legs entangled, and be held fast. At last I saw a thick log of wood floating a little way on.

"I will let Peter rest on it while I make my way to the shore, and, after recovering my strength, I will go off and tow him in," I thought to myself; and then I told him what I proposed doing. I swam up to the log, lifted Peter off with my left hand, and had placed



him on it, while I kept myself afloat with my right, when Ready began to bark furiously, turning round his head at the log, and swimming off in an opposite direction. I thought this odd, when suddenly the log began to move. A vast pair of jaws, with long rows of formidable teeth, opened, but instead of snapping at me, the alligator (for such it was, and of prodigious size) swam away after my faithful Ready. I seized poor

Peter, who, terror-stricken, was about to take a most uncomfortable ride on the alligator's back, and dragging him off before the creature had towed us many yards, I succeeded, by efforts which the greatest alarm alone could have enabled me to make, in reaching the shore. I climbed up the bank myself, and was dragging up poor Peter, when the alligator, disappointed in catching the sagacious Ready, who was safe on land, furiously barking at him, made a dash towards us. I had just time to draw the boy up by a violent jerk, when the monster's long jaws closed with a loud clack close to his heels. Peter shrieked out, believing that he was caught, but I soon reassured him, and, by setting him on his legs, proved that he had retained them. The alligator, or cayman, was, however, not to be balked of his prey, and, not being aware of the number of people floating away helplessly down the stream, he began to climb up the bank with the intention of catching one of us at least. The island was of about twenty acres in extent, with a clump of cypress trees and a palm or two in the centre; but the ground of the greater portion was soft and boggy, and covered with reeds, and long grass springing up among logs of timber, in all stages of decay, which had been washed up during the floods of spring. This was not very convenient ground for active operations; yet still the alligator took care that we should be actively employed. As we had no arms with which to assail him, we could only act on the defensive.

The alligator soon got up the bank, and then stopped and eyed us all three, meditating, apparently, which he should first devour. I had made Peter move a little way off on one side of me, while Ready ran about on the other. The brute was hungry, and, seeing that I

was the largest animal, he made up his mind to have me first; so on he waddled through the grass, at so rapid a rate, that the consequences, had I tumbled, would have been very serious.

Ready played his part admirably, and directly he saw that the cayman was running at me, he began to bark more furiously than ever, so as to distract the monster's attention. He succeeded, for the alligator stopped several times to look at him, but his mouth was watering with the anticipation of the *bonne bouche* my substantial carcass would prove, and he again made chase after me. I shouted to the lad to run for the clump of trees. He obeyed my directions as well as he could, but twice he fell and disappeared between some logs, and I was afraid he was lost, but he scrambled out and ran on. I had to keep my eyes about me, as I leaped from log to log, watching the alligator, and looking to see where I was going. I had got more than half way to the clump of trees, when I heard a loud hissing, and looking down, I found that I was about to leap into a nest of snakes. Mrs. Snake put up her head, of flat, venomous form, and I thought would have flown at me, but I sprang on one side with more agility than ever. I had not much fear of the cayman, but no courage, strength, or activity would avail against a single serpent, and the island, I suspected, swarmed with them. It would not, however, have done to stop, as the alligator, having no dread of the snakes, did not. Peter had reached the clump, and had wisely begun to climb a tree. I dashed after him, kicking up several rattle-snakes who had not time to bite me, Ready running by my side, and our pursuer, as the ground was smoother, following faster than ever. I seized Ready in my arms, and threw him up

to Peter, who caught him, and placed him safely on a branch, while I sprang up after him, and the alligator, who darted on, snapped his jaws within a foot of my legs as I swung them up out of his way. A pretty predicament we were in, perched on the branch of a cypress tree with the monster cayman leering up at us from below, and thinking it very hard, after all the trouble he had taken, that we should have escaped his jaws. Still I felt how much better off we were than the several hundred human beings who had so suddenly met a watery grave. I looked out from our perch towards the spot where the steamer had gone down. Not a creature could I see: the pieces of wreck, with people floating on them, had been carried out of sight down the stream, but whether any were likely to reach the shore I could not tell. I thought that some might; but I pictured them roaming about through those vast swamps, without food, far from human habitations, till at length they fell a prey to alligators, or were killed by serpents, or sank down and died from hunger and fatigue. Our position was not very pleasant either, for the river was so wide that I was not at all certain that we should be seen by vessels passing up and down; and I dreaded that we might be starved before we could get off. I grew very hungry, for I had been waiting to rush into dinner when the vessel sank. Peter had scarcely spoken; indeed, I was uncertain whether or not he was grateful to me for saving him; but he was evidently not a lad of words. I remarked that I had had nothing to eat since breakfast.

"What, haven't you had your dinner, sir?" he exclaimed, in a tone of surprise. "Well, things always turn out lucky with me. Here, sir."

Diving into his coat-pockets, he produced some meat and cheese, and two large lumps of bread, which, however, were rather mashed by the soaking they had got.

"There, take that; it will do you good; you want something after that long swim," said he.

"Thank you, I will take a piece of bread and meat gladly," I answered. "You, Peter, keep the rest for yourself."

"No, no, it's yours, sir. I'll not touch it," he replied in a determined, steady tone. I ate a small portion, and begged him to keep the rest.

"There's another friend wants something," he remarked, cutting off a piece of the cheese rind and some gristle from the meat, and giving them to Ready, who had looked up wistfully at him as he was handing me the food. "There, old fellow, you deserve it, I am sure you do," said he, patting the dog's head.

I had little doubt after this that Peter's heart was in the right place. Night, was coming on, and the danger of our position increased. When the sun went down, the mosquitoes attacked us furiously, and ran their huge probosces into our skins, till there was scarcely a spot without a wound. The only satisfaction was that they kept us awake; for had we gone to sleep, we might have fallen off the bough; and had we fallen off the bough, we should have tumbled into the jaws of the alligator, waiting anxiously below to devour us. Such were the not over-pleasant prospects for the approaching night.



CHAPTER II.

MOSQUITOES—A RUNAWAY SLAVE—I AM WOUNDED—THE STRUGGLE,
AND READY AND PETER COME TO THE RESCUE—PEACE NEGOTIA-
TIONS—TREATY OF ALLIANCE, DEFENSIVE AND OFFENSIVE—
THE CANOE VOYAGE—MARCUS'S STORY.

WE sat up in the tree, wishing that the alligator would betake himself to the waters of the Mississippi; but he seemed resolved to make his supper off one of us, and in this neither of us was willing to indulge him. Peter made no remarks, but Ready, every now and then, gave

a growl of disapprobation; indeed, I believe, had I allowed him, he would have jumped down and done battle with the monster. I did not suppose that the cayman would catch him; but I knew that he could not by any possibility hurt the cayman, so I kept him safe up on the branch beside me. The mosquitoes continued as active as ever, and as Peter and I had only each of us a hand at liberty, we could but partially defend ourselves from their attacks. Hour after hour passed by.

"I wonder whether it will ever be morning!" observed the poor lad, giving himself, for the thousandth time, a slap on the cheek.

"We are not the first people who have wished for the return of day, my boy," said I. "But hark——"

There was a slight sound as of an oar dipped in the water. It approached the island. It ceased, and I felt sure that the person or persons in the boat had landed. I listened. I could hear the sound of a canoe or boat being hauled up, and soon a light bursting forth showed me that a fire had been kindled, for the purpose probably of cooking. The alligator heard the sounds also, I suspect; for finding that we were not likely to come down to satisfy his appetite, he wheeled round and began to crawl back to the other spot whence the sounds proceeded. I suspected that he had not seen the fire, which, from our higher position we had observed, and I knew that he was not likely to approach it. I should otherwise have shouted out to warn whoever might be there of the approach of the monster. As soon as the brute had moved off, Peter, Ready, and I jumped down to the ground and advanced towards the spot where we had seen the fire. It had now burnt up brightly, and between us and it I observed the huge form

of the alligator crawling on. He must have suddenly become aware of the fire, for I saw him, much to my satisfaction, scramble off as fast as he could on one side, and the sound of a heavy plunge assured me that he had once more taken to the water. Peter and Ready followed at my heels. I slowly advanced, and in a short time I saw a man sitting down on his hams before the fire, at which he was cooking a fish. He was a negro, a big athletic-looking fellow, with a bare woolly head, and naked to the waist, round which he wore a belt, and in it were stuck a brace of pistols and a long bowie knife. The noise of the river rushing by and the crackling of the burning sticks had prevented him from hearing our approach. He turned his head—the glance of the fire fell on us. In a moment he was on his feet, and, drawing a pistol from his belt, he levelled it at my head.

“I am a friend,” I shouted out as rapidly as I could, but the black had not time to change the impulse given to his finger. There was a flash, a report, and a sharp stinging sensation in my neck told me that the bullet had taken effect. To save my life I sprang forward, and throwing myself with all my might on the stranger, I grasped his arm as he was drawing a second pistol, and bearing him down we both rolled over together to the ground and very nearly into the water. He was as strong as I was, and being naked I had great difficulty in holding his arms and preventing him from drawing his knife, which he made strenuous efforts to do, while at the same time he was evidently endeavouring to roll off the bank into the river, and to drag me with him. I could not help thinking of my friend, the cayman, who would probably have most largely benefited by the success of his attempt. When people go to fisty-

cuffs, there are seldom wanting alligators to profit by their quarrels. Had I been alone, strong and active as I was, I scarcely know what would have been the result; but I had two trusty friends at hand. We had not been struggling many moments, when Ready, having laid his plans for the campaign, flew at the negro's legs, one of which he gripped so firmly that the poor fellow roared out with pain; while Peter, after hesitating an instant, caught him by his woolly head and tugged away manfully in an opposite direction. In our struggles we all rolled into the fire—black, boy, dog, and I; and had not our clothes been still somewhat damp, we should have been quickly in flames, and, had the alligator come back, all ready cooked for his supper. As it was, we kicked about the burning ashes, tossing them into the air, when they came down in showers upon us, till, what with the singeing he was undergoing, the biting of the dog, and the pulling of his hair, the negro cried out lustily for mercy.

"Well, I have no wish to hurt you," said I, still holding down his arms. "Don't attempt again to shoot me, and I will very gladly be your friend. Off, Ready! let go dog! Don't pull the man's hair any more, boy."

Peter and the dog obeyed me, and the man, getting up and shaking himself, began to scrape the ashes together, and then, looking for his fish, stuck it on a stick to roast as if nothing particular had occurred.

"You are a cool hand, my friend," said I, sitting down opposite to him. "You might have killed me just now."

"Of course; I took you for an enemy," he answered.

"What enemies have you to fear?" I asked.

"Slave-hunters," he answered, grinding his teeth and uttering a fearful oath.

"But how do you know that we are not searching for a runaway slave?" I asked.

"Because you are an Englishman," he replied.

"Why do you fancy that?" said I.

"From the way you spoke to your boy and dog," he observed with a fierce laugh. "There would have been a kick and a curse had you belonged to this country; but, though you gripped me hard, and well-nigh squeezed the breath out of me, I know you to be a man, and I trust you."

"I am obliged to you for your confidence, and I will not betray it; though, as it may be better, I will ask no questions."

"That's wise; but I must ask you one," said the negro. "How came you here?"

I told him. He was silent for some time, turning his fish on the spit, while my companions, imitating my example, seated themselves beside me. Peter sat gaping with mute astonishment, Ready's lips and eye showed that he still looked on the big negro rather as an enemy than a friend. The excitement had hitherto prevented me from feeling the wound in my neck. The pain and a sensation of blood flowing down my shoulder reminded me of it, and I was about to call Peter to my aid, when the negro looked up and said,

"Stranger, you believe that all men have sprung from the same parents?"

"Certainly, my friend," I replied. "I have not the slightest doubt about the matter."

"Then, do you think that one portion has the right to keep another in bondage, to spit upon them, to beat and abuse them, and to treat them as brute beasts without souls?"

He ground his teeth as he continued speaking. I

saw that he was working himself up into a fury ; so I interrupted him :

"Assuredly not, my friend," I said. "No man has a right to keep another in slavery; but slavery is a fact, and facts are stubborn things, not to be got rid of."

"I don't quite understand you, stranger," he replied. "But, from what you say, I believe that you would help a slave to escape from his bonds, if you had the opportunity?"

This was a most disagreeable question. I had resolved, when I entered the slave states, not to interfere in the slightest way with the subject of slavery, and now I was asked to commit the most atrocious crime against the white community of which I could possibly be guilty.

"Do you ask me to help you?" said I.

"I do," was the answer.

"What claim have you on me?" I demanded.

"That of one man on another," said the negro, rising unconsciously, and stretching out his hand over the fire. "That of one immortal soul on its fellow, who must both stand, some day, before the judgment-seat of Heaven, to be judged of the deeds done in the flesh. If you have the feelings of a true man, the conscience of a living soul, you dare not refuse my appeal."

"I will not," I exclaimed, rising also and taking the negro's hand. "I will aid you at every risk, to the best of my power."

"Stranger," said the black, wringing my hand, while his voice trembled with emotion, "your words may prevent me from doing many a fierce deed, which I otherwise should have committed; from turning my hand against every man's; from believing that every man with a white skin is a demon in human shape."

He came round to me, and sat himself down by my side.

"But you are hurt," he observed, in a tone of concern, "and I, in my fear, did it. You have a handkerchief. It is only a flesh wound; I will bind it up. I wish I could do more."

Ready growled when he saw my late antagonist touching me, but proceeded no further in his hostilities. Peter brought some water in a pannikin, which the negro had with him, and my wound, being bathed freely, was bound up; and we sat down to discuss the fish, and another brought from the canoe, of which the negro insisted that we should partake, Ready coming in for the heads and bones. No one would have supposed that we and our entertainer had just before been engaged in a deadly struggle. I observed that the black man yawned and appeared very weary.

"I should like to sleep for a short time," he said. "You took something away from my strength. I have had also a long row, and have a longer before me. I know not when the chase after me may begin; but I do know that the blood-hounds will not give it up till they run me to earth, or till they are sure I have escaped them."

"I will gladly watch over you while you sleep," said I. "How long do you wish to rest?"

"Half-an-hour will be enough. That tussle with you wearied me more than all my previous exertions. Just keep the fire alight, or we may have more snakes and alligators visiting us than would be pleasant."

I promised to follow his wishes, and having reloaded the pistol he had fired at me, stretching himself on the ground, in an instant he showed me by his heavy breathing that he was fast asleep. What surprised me

most about the man was the way in which he spoke. The remarks he made caused me to suspect that he possessed a higher amount of education than I should have expected to find in a negro. I felt gratified, too, at the perfect confidence he placed in me. He was, at all events, evidently a man far above the common order, and I hoped to learn more about him before we separated. I employed Peter in collecting drift-wood, of which there was a plentiful supply on the island. The fire kept the mosquitoes off, and from the quiet I thus obtained I had the greatest difficulty in not going to sleep. The moment Peter sat down he fell off, and even Ready shut his eyes, though, if I moved in the slightest degree, he was awake again in an instant. I knew that I could depend on him for giving me timely notice of the approach of an enemy of any description; but still I did my utmost to keep my senses alive. By degrees, however, I began to see all sorts of curious shapes in the fire, and to hear strange noises; and wild unearthly shrieks struck on my ear, and snakes seemed to be crawling in and out among the embers, and then I suddenly found myself at the dear old hall, my home, with my feet on the parlour fender, while Bunbry's voice informed me that tea was in the drawing-room. I started up, and saw the negro watching me across the expiring embers of the fire.

"Pardon me, friend," said I. "Most unintentionally I went to sleep."

"I could not expect aught else," he answered, in a tone which made me feel rather ashamed of myself. "It is time for me to be moving. What do you wish to do?"

"To get away from this island. We shall be starved if we remain here," was my answer.

"I will take you," said the negro. "Step into the canoe—quick—all of you. Stay! I will put out the fire. It might betray me, should I be pursued."

He threw some water on the ashes, and scattered them about.

The canoe was what is called a "dug-out"—a hollowed trunk of a tree fashioned into a boat shape. Though narrow and light, it was long, and capable of carrying three or four people. Peter and I stepped in, followed by Ready. The negro, taking his seat in the centre, turned to me and asked if I could row. I told him that I could.

"Then I will thank you to take one of the paddles and help me. I have a long voyage before me. We will go up the stream."

We paddled rapidly along. The negro steered, keeping out of the strength of the current. He seemed to know the river well. I was curious to ascertain something about the man. That he was a common plantation negro I did not think possible.

"You have travelled, friend?" I observed.

"I have. I have visited your country. I have trod a free soil. I have read much. I know the rights of man, and I resolved no longer to be a slave," he answered, with a rapid utterance. "I remembered, too, the days of my childhood, when I roamed free in my native woods on the shores of Africa, the son of a powerful chief. Indistinctly at first, but afterwards clearly as I dwelt upon them, those times came back upon me, and I could bear my chains and degradation no longer. You are surprised at my telling you that I have read much. In my youth I accompanied my master to England. He was a kind man. He allowed me to be instructed in reading. I learned rapidly.

My master, on leaving England, persuaded me to accompany him, promising legally to manumit me on our arrival in the States. In England I had become a free man. I had almost forgotten what slavery was. My master died on the voyage. I apprehended no danger, though, for prudence sake, I contemplated returning to England; but scarcely had I set foot on shore, than I was seized by the captain of the ship which brought me, and claimed as a slave. I was carried off to my master's heir. He has taken care to make me feel what slavery is. I will not tell you what I have borne—how my purest and best feelings have been outraged—how one I loved was torn from me—how——But to go on would unman me; and I have need of all my coolness and self-possession. About four miles from this there is a village. I will land you there, and we must part. I shall not tell you what course I intend to pursue: it may be better for you not to know."

I agreed with him in this, but at the same time I had become so interested in the fate of the poor fellow, that I was willing to run any risk to assist him. I told him so. He thanked me, but said that he would not allow me.

"And by what name shall I remember you?" I asked.

"I have been called Marcus—Marcus the slave. I do not boast of any other," he answered bitterly. "Dogs and negroes have seldom more than one name."

"Marcus, I shall never forget you. I hope we may meet again," said I. "Our first introduction was somewhat unpleasant, but we part as friends." He leaned forward, and grasped my hand.

"Hark!" he whispered, suddenly. "There is the sound of paddles in the water." His quick ear had

detected the sound before I had done so. I could hear nothing. "I am certain of it," he exclaimed, with a groan. He was right.

"Here, take my paddle, and let the boy use yours; it is my only chance should my pursuers be at hand. I will lay down at the bottom of the canoe. Now, round with her; and pull down the stream to meet them. The best way to escape danger is boldly to face it. I may be supposed to be a wounded or a dead man." The change of places was quickly effected, and turning round the canoe, Peter and I paddled down the stream, with Ready standing in the bows, looking out ahead. I could now hear the sound of paddles in the water. Already the first streaks of dawn had appeared in the eastern sky. Our only chance of escape was to pass the strangers before the light should show them the canoe, or, should they discover us, before they could see that there was any one in her besides Peter, Ready, and me. We paddled on steadily. The men in the approaching canoe were talking, and, from the words which reached my ears, I could have little doubt that they were in search of the fugitive slave.



CHAPTER III.

THE PURSUIT—THE FIGHT AND VICTORY—WE DISPOSE OF OUR PRISONERS—THE BLACK DWARF—THE CITY OF THEMISTOCLES—WE PART COMPANY—I GO WITH PETER AND READY ABOARD THE WONDROUS HIGHFLIER.

HAPPILY, I was well accustomed to the use of a paddle; Peter was not. I therefore told him to lay his down, while I steered the canoe with as little noise as possible, inclining towards the opposite bank near which I fancied the slave-hunters were working their way up the stream.

The light was increasing,—the voices grew louder.

I guessed that the other canoe must be about abreast of us. "A few minutes more, and we shall be free of her," I thought to myself, when I observed that Ready was throwing up his nose and stretching out his neck. I tried by a low whisper to tranquillise him. In vain. He ran to the side nearest the other canoe and gave a furious bark. It was immediately responded to by another dog, and a vehement exchange of fierce growls and barkings ensued.

"Who goes there?" shouted some one in a surly voice. "Answer, or I'll fire."

"Don't do that same, friend," I replied in as calm a tone as I could command. "I've just escaped drowning, and I've no fancy to be shot. You haven't heard, then, that the Mighty Go-ahead has gone down, and to the best of my knowledge every soul has perished, except a boy I picked up, and two or three people I saw floating down the stream, and who may possibly have reached the shore in safety."

"Not very likely that," observed another man, with a savage laugh. "The Mississippi isn't famous for helping people to swim ashore."

The first speaker now inquired how the accident had happened, and how I had escaped. I told him.

"Then it was daylight when the Mighty Go-ahead went down," remarked another man. "What have you been doing with yourself ever since, stranger?"

I replied that I had spent part of the night up a tree, till, coming down, I had discovered the canoe in which I had embarked, and was on my way back to New Orleans. By this time I could see the other canoe and the people in her. There were three of them. Their dog, a large bloodhound, and mine continued to exchange fierce barks and growls, in spite

of our mutual endeavours to silence them. This was an advantage to me. It gave me time to consider what I should say. I was very anxious, not on my own account, but for the sake of Marcus. Still should it come to a tussle, in which our antagonists might not have the advantage of their fire-arms, I thought very probably Marcus, Peter, and I might come off victorious, and I felt sure that Ready would give some account of the other dog. It was, however, more than possible, should we begin to fight, that our canoes would be upset, and that we might all be drowned together. I did not wish to show the slightest unwillingness to approach the other canoe, lest I might raise the suspicions of the men in her, so we gradually dropped nearer together. The closer we got, the more furiously did our dogs bark. The other dog seemed scarcely able to keep himself in the canoe, as he ran backwards and forwards in an ungovernable rage. I was in hopes that the men had finished questioning me, and would allow me to proceed. I gave a flourish with my paddle, and had made a stroke with it which sent the canoe ahead, when one of the men cried out—

“You don’t happen to have seen a darkie, as you came along, stranger, have you?”

“Not very likely that I should have seen one in the dark. His colour would not be favourable for that,” I replied, evasively.

“But Sharpfangs smells him, though,” exclaimed one of the other men, with a terrible oath. “Seize him!”

What else was said I scarcely heard. I thought that it was all over with Marcus, and probably with myself. To attempt escaping a conflict seemed hopeless. Marcus did not stir; but I heard the click of a pistol.

The other canoe, the bloodhound standing ready for a spring, dashed alongside ours. I had no time for considering how I should act. Still Marcus did not move. As the sides of the two canoes touched, up he rose with his gleaming dagger in his hand. The furious dog flew at him ; but he was prepared, and, striking the brute full in the chest, he hurled it from him overboard, and in another instant a bullet from his pistol had gone through the head of one of the men, who fell backward into the stream. Another of the men was lifting his rifle to fire ; but the negro, quick as lightning, sprang on board the canoe, and wrenching it from him, he cast it into the water.

On this the man drew a long bowie-knife from his belt ; but before he could strike with it, Marcus had seized him by the wrist, and the two closed in a deadly struggle. I had wished not to interfere ; but when I saw the other white man draw his knife, evidently with the intention of striking Marcus, I could not resist springing into the canoe, when, grasping his arm, I bore him down to the bottom of it. It is surprising that we did not upset the canoe, which was, however, a large and broad one. Peter, with much forethought, before attempting to come to my assistance, lashed the two canoes together. Ready, however, the instant the man fell, springing into the canoe, seized his left arm, and held him down so tightly that he could make no effectual resistance. He struggled, however, and endeavoured, as we rolled about in the bottom of the canoe, to strike his knife into me. As soon, therefore, as Peter was at liberty, I told him to try and wrench the knife out of the man's hand. This he did, and then he gave me a piece of rope, which, with his help, I passed rapidly round my antagonist's wrists, while I

kept him down by kneeling on his chest, and very nearly squeezing the breath out of his body.

All this time the canoe was rocking so violently from side to side that I expected every instant to find myself struggling in the water. The same idea probably occurred to my antagonist, and this, as very likely he could not swim, paralysed his efforts more than it did mine. At all events, in a few minutes I found myself the victor, and, leaving Peter and Ready in charge of my conquered foe, I was able to go to the assistance of Marcus, at the other end of the canoe.

The man with whom he was struggling was little less inferior in strength to himself, and, had I not been able to help him, the issue might have been doubtful. By stepping into our canoe I got at the man's arms, and held them down, while Marcus, still kneeling on his body, lashed them securely together, and prevented him from making any further resistance.

"You'll not let that — darkie murder me, stranger?" said the man, in a humbled tone.

"Do you think the scars of your merciless lash have yet disappeared from my shoulders?" said the negro, grinding his teeth. "Can you restore those you tore from me and delivered over to worse than death? Am I to forget the curses, the insults, you have heaped on me?"

He seized the man and shook him, as a savage dog does an animal he has conquered. I dreaded that he was about to throw the overseer—for such I supposed the man to be—into the water.

"Hold, Marcus!" I exclaimed. "I cannot stand by and allow murder to be committed. These men are now in our power, and we may dispose of them as may be necessary for our safety; but we must not take their lives."

"To kill 'them will be the only safe way of disposing of them," he answered, in a hoarse voice. "What else but death can such vermin expect at my hands?"

I was in hopes that he said this to frighten the men, rather than with an intention of murdering them. At the same time I well knew that, even had he not killed their companion, he could expect no mercy at their hands. I remembered, also, that, having participated, as it would be called, in the crime, though my conscience was free from guilt, I should certainly share the consequences. Probably, if caught, we should both of us, and very likely Peter and Ready also, be hung up from the nearest tree. How to dispose of our prisoners was therefore the question. Of course the tempter, ever ready to instigate men to do evil, whispered, "Kill them;" and the cowardice in our hearts added, "It will be the safest course." But I had been taught some maxims, when I was a boy, which I did not forget. They were, "Do right, whatever comes of it;" "Never do wrong in the hopes of avoiding a possible evil." Accordingly I entreated Marcus to refrain from injuring the men, and to come into our canoe, and talk the matter over.

Having thrown all the arms overboard, except a rifle which lay loaded at the bottom of the boat, we stepped back into our canoe, followed by Peter and Ready, and paddled away out of earshot of our prisoners. Marcus suggested various plans for their disposal. Although but a few minutes had elapsed since I caught the first glimpse of the other canoe, the dawn had increased so much that we could already see the shore on either hand. Marcus stood up and looked about him.

"I see where we are," he whispered as he sat down.

"I have a friend who lives not far off. We will blindfold the eyes of the men, and leave them under his charge. He will take good care that they do not escape till we have had time to get out of their reach."

The plan seemed good; so dropping alongside the canoe, we took the men's handkerchiefs from their pockets and secured them over their eyes. I observed that Marcus went to the man whose eyes I had bound, and tightened the handkerchief. The man groaned.

"Ah! it is not pleasant, but you might be seeing things you should not, if it slipped," said the black, between his teeth. "Be silent; we are not going to kill you, as you deserve."

We now took the smaller canoe in tow, and paddled rapidly on. We had need of haste, for the steamers and other craft might be moving up and down the river, and we might be discovered. We crossed to the opposite or west side of the river, to a spot where a wide stream ran into it. We pulled up a little way, with dark woods on either side of us, till we came to a small island, on which Marcus ran the canoe on shore. Putting his finger to his lips to enjoin silence on Peter and me, he stepped on shore, and disappeared amidst the tangled underwood. I sat watching our captives, and wondering what was to be done with them. One of them was working his head about, evidently with the hopes of loosening the handkerchief. I gave him a touch with the paddle, and Ready, who seemed to consider that he was to keep watch and ward over the vanquished, uttered a fierce growl, which made the man keep perfectly still, though he groaned in his rage and fear. In a short time Marcus returned with a companion, another negro, but very unlike himself. The new-comer was short, and out of

all proportion broad ; indeed he was a dwarf Hercules, for the appearance of his head and shoulders showed that he possessed immense muscular power. He soon gave proof of his strength, for, looking into the canoe, he stooped down, and lifting one of the men up, he carried him off on his back, with as much ease as if he had been an infant. The man shrieked out with pain, for the cords cut his wrists; but the dwarf only uttered a hoarse peal of laughter and walked on, more than once striking the unfortunate wretch against the trees as he passed. He soon returned for the other, whom he treated in the same way. I observed that Marcus removed everything from the larger canoe into ours. By the time this was done, the dwarf came back again, and, nodding to his companion, lifted the canoe bodily up out of the water, and carried it off on his shoulders among the bushes.

"Come, it is time that we were away," said Marcus.

Once more we all three resumed our seats in our canoe. Ready took his place in the bow, and away we paddled as before. I could scarcely persuade myself that the fierce tragedy in which I had just taken a part had really occurred. All seemed like some dreadful dream. I said nothing ; I could not speak. Marcus was silent. We paddled on out of the river, and into the Mississippi, nearly to the middle of it. There he looked around him, and then dropped the articles he had taken out of the other canoe, one after the other, into the water. The rifle and other heavy things sank ; the rest floated down the stream.

"If they are seen, so much the better," observed Marcus. "It will be supposed that the canoe was upset, and the men were drowned."

"But surely their lives are safe?" I observed, with some doubt in my tone, for I could not help thinking of the ferocious countenance of the man in whose power we had left them.

"Safe enough, but not agreeable," he answered. "Ah! if you knew all I have suffered from those men, you would own that I have treated them mildly. I spared their lives for your sake, and partly that I did not wish to have more blood on my hands than I have already; and yet, to effect my purpose, how much deeper may I have to dye them! Every man's hand is against me, and mine must be against every man. Alas, alas! hard is my lot! Oh! stranger, be thankful to Heaven that you have a white skin and are a free man!"

He spoke in a tone of the bitterest anguish. I tried to console him. Too true, every man's hand in that country would be against him; not because he had killed a fellow creature, but because he was attempting to escape from bondage and degradation.

We continued paddling on for some time without speaking, till we came in sight of a collection of log huts and a landing-place. It was a city, he told me—or at least a city that was to be—with a very fine name—the City of Themistocles, if I recollect rightly.

"I'll put you on shore there, stranger," he observed. "There is no one on the quay. They are not early-risers in that place. You can expect no better opportunity of being free of me. There, leap on shore. Say that a negro, in a canoe, took you off an island to which you had swum when the steamer went down, and that after he had landed you here he went on his way. Be wise; say nothing more. The boy understands me?"

Peter nodded.

"Farewell!"

Marcus put out his hand. I shook it warmly. We exchanged no other words. I sprang on shore, followed by Peter and Ready, and the canoe glided away down the stream, and was soon out of sight. We sat down on some logs piled up ready for the steamers, and Ready, conceiving that he had for the present done his duty, coiled himself at my feet, and went to sleep. I was too anxious to do the same, though I leaned back against the logs to rest my weary frame. It must be remembered that, since the steamer went down, the only rest I had enjoyed was while sitting over the fire with Marcus. I had had a fatiguing swim, a run from an alligator, a climb up a tree, to the branches of which I had had to hang on for some hours, a desperate struggle for life, a long paddle, a second fierce conflict, and another paddle, not to speak of the anxiety to which I had all the time been subject. I had not rested long, when Ready started up and uttered a warning bark, and I saw a couple of men lazily sauntering down from the huts towards the quay, and rubbing their eyes as if just awoke out of sleep.

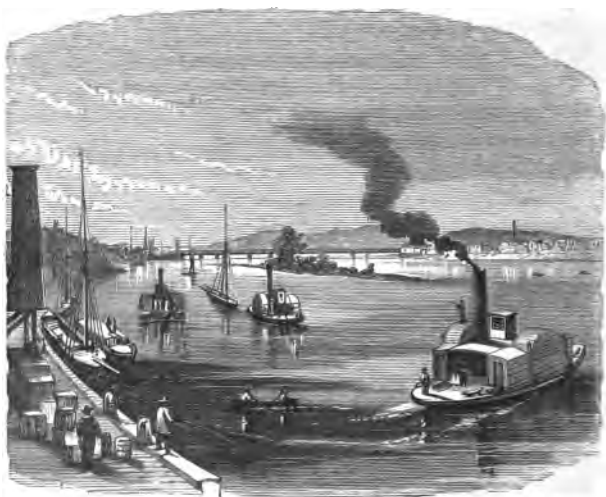
"Well, and where do you come from, stranger?" was the very natural question they put to me, and which I willingly answered by telling them of the loss of the *Mighty Go-ahead*, and of most, if not all, of her crew and passengers.

"Then that's the shouts we heard last night," observed one of the men to the other.

The men, I found, were overseers of some gangs of negroes, a number of whom soon appeared, some loaded with bales of merchandise, and others with logs of wood. They came stumbling along, laughing and chattering in spite of their burdens. Several, however, relaxing

in their efforts, when their taskmasters' whips descended on their shoulders, howled with pain, but they were very speedily again shouting and talking as merrily as before. The overseers were evidently not satisfied with my account of myself. I looked anxiously up the river for the steamer coming down on her passage to New Orleans, but I found that she was not expected for another hour. I would have tried to obtain some refreshment, but I knew that if I went to the huts I should be subjected to more inquiries, so I told my companion that we would wait till we got on board the steamer for breakfast. While waiting, I gathered from the conversation of the overseers that Marcus's pursuers had actually touched there on their way up, and had left a full description of him. I felt thankful that no one had been about when he put us on shore. As it was, I could not help fancying that the overseers associated us in some way with him.

It was a great relief to my mind when I caught sight of the huge steamer afar off, gliding rapidly along over the bosom of the mighty stream, her white paint glistening in the beams of the morning sun, and contrasting with the dark foliage of the trees which lined the bank. The negroes stood marshalled ready with their loads to rush on board. Her tinkling bell gave notice to the engineers to stop. She came alongside the quay. Peter, Ready, and I sprang into her vast interior, among casks and chests and bales, and soon found our way into the saloon above, and on to the platform abaft, where I hoped Ready would be allowed to remain. Once more the bell tinkled. The huge wheels of the *Wondrous Highflier* began to revolve, and away she glided down the Mississippi.



CHAPTER IV.

ARRIVE AT NEW ORLEANS, AND OFF TO GALVESTON IN TEXAS—A HURRICANE AND WORSE—THE PIRATE—A FIGHT FOR IT—WE ARE LOST—AN UNEXPECTED FRIEND—THE BLACK FINS—MARCUS HAS CHARGE OF THE PIRATES' PRIZE, AND LANDS US AT GALVESTON.

THE quay was still in sight, and I saw several men rushing along it, waving their hands, and apparently shouting at the top of their voices ; but the paddles made too much noise to allow of their being heard, while, as the master and crew of the steamer were looking ahead, they were not seen. I had an idea that they wanted to say something about me, and I was very glad when the *Wondrous Highflier* had run the City of Themistocles out of sight. We reached New Orleans without any adventure, and I was not sorry to

get a shave and to change my clothes, which were not improved by the adventures I had gone through. I took Peter regularly into my service, for, poor fellow, he had no one else on whom to depend, and I thus obtained an attendant on whose fidelity I could perfectly rely.

I had now to consider in which direction I should next bend my steps. It was a question with me whether I should make another attempt to ascend the Mississippi or steer my course to the westward. I was, I found, more knocked up than I had at first supposed, and required some days' rest. A week or more passed before I again went out. The second or third day after this, I was sauntering along, when I encountered a negro staggering under what seemed a very heavy load. Presently he came directly against me, and as his white eyes rolled round, I heard him say—

"Massa, you Harry Skipwith? Den cut away from here, or you no live to-morrow. You know Marcus. Dat's 'nough!"

On went the negro, staggering as before under his load, and I soon lost sight of him among the motley crowd of that capital of the South. After all I had heard it would have been madness to have neglected the warning, so on my way to my hotel I inquired at a ship-broker's if any vessel was ready to sail for Galveston, the chief port of Texas.

"The steamer goes in three days," was the answer.

"Yes, but I have a fancy to go by a sailing vessel."

"Oh, if that's it, there's a fine brig, the *Shaddock*, Captain Buckwheat, sails this evening. If you can be ready, I will ask the captain if he can give you a berth."

I did not wish to appear too eager, so I said I would try to get ready, and, if I succeeded, I would take a passage in the *Shaddock*.

I had never shrunk from danger when I could meet it face to face, but the uncertain character of that which now threatened me made me unusually nervous.

I hurried back to my hotel, and, after packing up my luggage, I ordered some negro porters to convey it down to the wharf where the schooner was lying, telling Peter to accompany them, while Ready and I followed at a distance.

I had a notion that the men whom Marcus and I had encountered on the river had escaped, and in each white man I met I expected to recognise one of them. Of course I knew their features better than they could know mine, for it was still dusk when our struggle took place; but then I had told them that I had escaped from the *Mighty Go-ahead*. That was a sufficient clue for them to trace me; and that they would attempt to do so, and not rest till they had wreaked a bitter vengeance on my head, I felt very sure.

I was walking leisurely along, when I felt some one brush by. A voice said, "Quick, massa, quick!" It was the same black who had in the morning given me the friendly warning. I hurried on, and reached the *Shaddock* without interruption.

"You're just in time; we should have sailed without you, if you hadn't come," said Captain Buckwheat, as I stepped on board. "We were all ready ten minutes ago; the wind is fair, and we can't afford to lose time in this country, whatever's your fashion in the Old World."

I heartily agreed with my friend in this instance, and was not sorry to see that the last warp was being

cast off, and that the topsails were loosed. I recognised the friendly negro watching the brig at a distance, as she slowly glided out from among the other vessels. Once free of them, aided by the current, we made rapid progress down the river. I could not help frequently looking astern, to ascertain if we were followed; and though I had done nothing of which my conscience accused me, I had a pretty vivid notion of the feelings which must animate a culprit endeavouring to escape from the hands of justice. When clear of the yellow-mouthed Mississippi, the wind fell, and the brig lay rolling on the glassy yet undulating surface of the ocean. The sun, casting a blood-red hue on the water, was just sinking behind a dark mound of vapour to the west, while in the east vast masses of ensanguined clouds floated slowly across the sky. I had never felt the air so hot and oppressive. Even Ready lay gasping at my feet, looking up inquiringly into my countenance, with his tongue out.

"There's something coming," observed the skipper, and he ordered every stitch of canvas to be furled, and the topmasts to be struck. There was indeed something coming. Scarcely was the vessel made snug, than down came the hurricane on us with terrific violence. Away we drove helplessly before it, like a mere straw on the water. Happily it was from the westward, or we should have driven on shore. Away we scudded, out of our course, but that could not be helped. When the hurricane ceased, we found that we had been whisked off some two or three hundred miles nearer Cuba than we were when it began. The wind subsided towards evening, and though the little vessel tumbled about a good deal, we were once more able to make sail. Two days after that, I was awake soon after day-

break, by a loud exclamation uttered by the captain, who had entered the cabin. I saw him busily employed in stowing away some papers and bags, which he had taken out of a chest, in a hole under his bed-place.

"What is the matter?" I asked.

"Matter! why that a pirate is close aboard us, and that the chances are we all have our throats cut before ten minutes are over. That's something the matter, I guess."

I agreed with him, and slipping into my clothes, hurried on deck. There, about two hundred yards off, on our quarter, coming fast up with us, was a long, low, black schooner, the very beau-ideal of a pirate. Her decks were crowded with men, all black, and a very villanous-looking crew they appeared to be. At that moment, that we might have no doubt as to her character, up went a black flag at her peak, and a shot from a gun in her bows came whizzing between our masts.

While the black schooner approached, the crew of the *Shaddock* were employed in making sail, but I saw at a glance that we had not the slightest chance of escaping; still I have always held that while there is life we should never despair, so I lent a hand with all my might at pulling and hauling. Peter followed my example. Ready took the end of the ropes in his mouth and hauled too, but I cannot say that he did much good.

"Will those black chaps aboard there really cut all our throats, as the captain says?" asked Peter, looking up at me. "We'll stand up and fight them before we give in, I hope, sir!"

"I hope so too, Peter," I answered. "But our two

guns cannot do much against the six or eight they carry, besides that long fellow amidships."

"Hip, hurrah! there is the captain casting loose our little barkers—we are not to yield without a blow."

By this time all sail was set—the guns were manned, and the captain now served out arms to all on board.

The pirates, however, on seeing that notwithstanding all our efforts we could not escape them, did not again fire. Our two guns could do very little harm to them till they got nearer. They were run over on the star-board side, on which the schooner was approaching.

"Aim high, lads," said the captain to his two mates who had charge of them. "Our best chance will be to knock away some of his spars."

"Ay, aye, sir," was the answer, given in a cheerful voice, which, at all events, betrayed no fear.

It was satisfactory to feel that we were to have a stroke for life, and yet, as the schooner drew near, and I observed through my glass the villanous-looking, well-armed fellows who crowded her decks, and saw the size of her guns, I felt that we had but little chance of escaping.

"Now, lads, see what you can do," cried the captain, who was narrowly watching the schooner.

Our two pop-guns gave out their puffs of smoke, and a couple of holes in the enemy's sails showed that the aim had not been bad, but no other damage was done.

Still the schooner did not fire, but came silently and stealthily gliding on in a way which was much more calculated to try our courage than if her crew had been shouting and gesticulating. It showed that they had perfect confidence in their own power. The mates loaded and fired their guns again. An after mainbrace aboard the schooner was shot away, and it made her head incline a little more towards us.

We were now almost within pistol-shot of each other, when I saw some thirty muskets levelled at us, and the next instant a rattling shower of bullets came whistling round our heads. Several of our poor fellows fell: the rest fired in return, but before the smoke cleared away, with a loud crash the pirate ran us aboard, and fifty fierce-looking desperadoes sprang shouting on our deck.

I had armed myself with a cutlass, resolving to fight to the last, though fully expecting to be cut to pieces. Ready stood barking furiously on one side of me; Peter kept on the other. Captain Buckwheat proved that he was a man, but he was cut down by a pirate's sword, as was one of the mates close to me, and in less than a minute half our crew lay bleeding on the deck. Our opponents were mostly blacks—though there were brown fellows also—and as they were shouting in English, I concluded that they were either runaway American slaves or vagabond negroes from the West India Islands. Not that I thought much about what they were at the time; indeed, the grinding of the two vessels together, the cries and shrieks of the combatants, the smoke and rattle of firearms, and the fall of spars and blocks from aloft completely bewildered me, besides which all my energies were required for my own defence.

Scarcely an instant after the pirates had reached our decks, I found myself set on by a huge brown fellow, who had led the boarders, and was apparently an officer among them. He was a good swordsman, and had not Ready flown at his legs, and Peter kept poking at him with a boarding-pike, he would soon have put me *hors de combat*. With their aid I managed to defend myself till several other fellows set upon me, and, overmatched, the big pirate had his sword uplifted to

cut me down, when a black man sprang forward and interposed his own weapon between it and my head, shouting at the same time—

“Back, all of you. That man’s life is sacred, and the lad’s too. You’ll own it when I tell you.”

It was a thoroughly melodramatic position. Though he was now dressed as an officer, I instantly recognised in my deliverer, Marcus, the slave, whose life I had assisted to save.

The pirates, who were about to hack me to pieces, now surrounded me with friendly gestures, and I felt that I was safe. When, however, I looked about me, I saw with regret that not a single man of the crew had escaped: a few were gasping out their heart’s blood on deck; the rest were dead. I should by that time have been in the same condition had not Marcus interposed to save me. Ready recognised him immediately, but he snapped and growled at the other blacks as they passed. Poor Peter kept close to my side; though so ready at first to fight, he was unaccustomed to scenes of slaughter, and was terror-stricken with the horrors he had witnessed.

Marcus kept near us, sword in hand, evidently uncertain how the pirates might treat us, and prepared, if necessary, to do battle in our cause. I wished to address him—I scarcely knew how.

“Marcus,” I said at length, “I am grateful to you for saving my life, but I little expected to find you in such company.”

“‘Misfortune introduces us to strange bedfellows’ is an old saying,” he answered. “And most decidedly my misfortunes have given me some roughish companions; but you see I have already gained some influence over them; and of one thing be assured, your

life and that of the lad are safe. When I tell them what you have done for me, there is not a man of all this lawless band who would not be ready to die for you. One hideous monster, slavery, has made them all what they are; and when they know how you hate it, they will love you."

While Marcus was speaking, the pirates were unceremoniously pitching the dead bodies of my shipmates overboard—all of them yet warm—some who had scarcely ceased to breathe. Two or three, though badly wounded, were yet fully capable of comprehending their position. They begged—they entreated for life.

"What are you—Englishmen or Americans?"

Two owned that they were Americans from the Northern States.

"Then overboard with them," shouted the captain. "We'll not deprive the sharks of their share of the booty."

One man declared that he was an Englishman, but a tin case was found on him, containing a certificate of his being a citizen of the United States. I was certain, from some remarks which he had let fall, that the man had run from a British man-of-war. In vain he protested that he hated slavery and the people of the States, that he was a true-born Briton—in vain he shrieked out and entreated for mercy. In spite of his desperate struggles, he was lifted up and thrown among the shoal of black-finned monsters which surrounded the vessel. I cannot dwell longer on these horrors—I would gladly shut them out from my thoughts as I would then have done from my sight.

The schooner's crew were sufficiently numerous to man the brig more strongly than before; some more

guns were sent on board her, that part of her cargo which seemed useless thrown overboard, and the two vessels then made sail together. I was allowed to retain my cabin, and Peter had one awarded him aft, that he might be near me.

Marcus came on board as one of the officers of the prize. I asked him how he came to know enough of nautical affairs to take a command among the pirates.

"I picked up my knowledge on my voyage to England," he answered. "Besides, a very small amount of knowledge makes me superior to most of my companions. Only two or three know anything of navigation, and that very imperfectly. The captain knows most, and he is jealous of any equal. If he were to be killed, the rest would scarcely find their way into a port; but for that he does not care."

"But, Marcus," said I, "how can you, a man capable of better things, endure such a life?"

"I hate it," he answered bitterly. "Recollect, though, what drove me to it. To escape from the lash and chains, from indignities and insults, what will not a man endure?"

"Will you leave it?" I asked.

"Yes, certainly, if I have the means," he answered.

"I will afford them if I have the power," I answered.

"Trust to me; think on the subject, but do not allow your comrades to suspect your intentions, nor to observe that we have any secrets between us."

Marcus walked forward. The two vessels made sail to the westward. A mulatto acted as captain of the brig. He seemed to be a smart seaman, but knew very little of navigation. I now had practical experience of the advantage of never losing an opportunity of gaining knowledge. Whenever I had been at sea I

had always endeavoured to pick up as much nautical information as possible, and had learnt to take an observation and to work a day's work with perfect ease. I therefore offered my services to navigate the brig to any port to which the pirates wished to proceed, intimating that I should prefer being set on shore on the mainland.

"You were bound for Galveston, and we will go there," said Marcus. "We will put you on shore on the island; and should the truth be suspected, we can be far away before any vessel is sent in pursuit of us."

Marcus afterwards told me that he arranged with his shipmates to do as I wished. It was wonderful what influence he had in a short time gained over those lawless characters. It was the triumph of mind over brute strength. He had, I learned, however, known several of his present comrades before, and they had spoken in his praise to the rest. Cruel wretches as the pirates had become, they treated me with every consideration, and supplied me with all the luxuries at their command. Light and contrary winds delayed our progress, so that ten days passed before we made the low sandy shore of Galveston Island.

The sky was of intense blue, the ocean, smooth as glass, shone with brilliant lustre, and the sun's rays darted down on our deck, making the pitch in the seams bubble and hiss, while a line of white sand was the only soil on which I could hope to land—terra-firma it certainly was not.

The atmosphere sparkled with heat—the sand almost blinded me, and I expected to be thoroughly cooked before I reached Galveston. Still my desire to be free of the pirates overcame every other consideration. The two vessels stood in. There was nothing suspicious

about the brig, and the schooner was made to look as innocent as possible. How my followers and I were to get on shore was now the question. At length we made out some canoes with Indians in them fishing. We made a signal, and one of them paddled towards us. The people in her held up the fish they had caught and offered them for sale, thinking that was what we wanted. They seemed rather astonished when they saw that Peter and I were the only white people on board. The captain took the fish, paid them liberally, and then told them that they must take some passengers, who wanted to land at Galveston, as he was bound elsewhere. After some bargaining, the Indians agreed to do as we desired.

I took the opportunity, while the captain was bargaining with the Indians, to ask Marcus how he purposed to quit the pirate band.

"If you remain willingly among evil companions, you cannot avoid being responsible for their crimes," I observed.

"I must bide my time," he answered. "I have promised you that I will do my best to quit them, and I never break my word."

I knew that I could trust him. My parting with the pirates was brief. Marcus was the only man on board with whom I could bring myself to shake hands. Scarcely had I and Peter and Ready taken our seats in the narrow canoe, with my very moderate amount of luggage between my knees, than, a breeze springing up, the two vessels stood away from the land. The canoe's head was put towards the north end of the island on which Galveston stands. Our crew were of a peculiarly unhealthy-looking olive-colour, their faces being covered with wrinkled parchment-like skin.

A straw hat and a shirt and belt formed their costume. They understood a little English, but I judged it better not to enter into conversation with them, lest they should ask inconvenient questions; and so almost in silence, except when they exchanged a few remarks with each other in their native tongue, we glided over the sparkling water. At length, when we had rounded the north end of the island, they ran the canoe on to the beach, and told me to get out, as they were going no further. I expostulated, but they said that they had performed their contract, and had their reasons for not going to the town with such suspicious people as we were. Against this I had nothing to say. I thus had practical experience of the inconvenience of having been seen in bad company. Though a reason, it is the lowest for avoiding it. How to get my baggage into the town was a puzzle, till I bethought me of slinging it on a long pole, one end of which Peter carried on his shoulder, and the other I placed under my arm, and thus we began our march towards the town.



CHAPTER V.

OFF BY STEAMER TO HOUSTON—ANTS, AND HOW TO AVOID THEM
—BY WAGGON THROUGH FORESTS—SILAS SLAG, OUR KENTUCKIAN
DRIVER—I BUY HORSES AND ENGAGE AN INDIAN GUIDE—THE
PRAIRIE—TWO HUMAN SKULLS—THE COMANCHES.

THE founders of Galveston must have been very fond of sand. It stands on sand, is surrounded by sand, and in high winds almost covered with sand. We could scarcely get along. We sank over our ankles at every step. I heard Peter groan frequently, and poor Ready dragged his weary legs after my heels with his tongue out, till I began to be afraid that he would go mad with the heat. As to fresh water, that seemed an impossi-

bility, and there was nothing cooling in the appearance of the bright shining surface of the surrounding ocean. Still to stop would positively have been death, so on we trudged, I doing my best to keep up the spirits of my two-legged as well as four-legged companion. At last, in no very dignified guise, we entered among the streets of wooden houses, bordered by odoriferous and flowering trees, which compose Galveston. Two white people carrying a load was a sight rarely seen, and when we reached the door of an hotel the clerk and waiters looked at me with so supercilious an air, that I saw it would be necessary to assume an authoritative manner.

"Here, some of you lend a hand," I exclaimed. "A pretty country this of yours, where a gentleman on landing can find neither porter nor carriage to convey his baggage! All I can hope is that your hotel will make some amends for the inconvenience I have suffered."

The people, as I knew they would, began to defend their country, to assert that there was not a finer in the world; and then, to prove that their hotel was a good one, gave me one of the best rooms.

Galveston struck me as remarkable for the pungent sting of the mosquitoes, the undrinkable nature of the water, and the number of vociferating negroes, though there were some tolerable buildings and broadish streets. Perhaps I was prejudiced, for, not feeling very comfortable as to my safety, I was anxious to get out of the place again.

Having got a bill cashed at a somewhat high discount, and written home an account of my adventures to Aunt Becky, with a request that my epistle might be sent the round of the family, I put myself, with Peter and Ready, on board a steamer bound for Houston, the

capital of Texas. We crossed the straits which separate Galveston from the mainland, and entering the Buffalo River found ourselves between lofty banks, covered in the richest profusion with magnolias and other flowering shrubs, and groves of lofty trees, among which flitted birds of the gayest plumage, while squirrels sported and leaped from branch to branch. Houston is picturesquely situated, and will, I have no doubt, become an important place, as it already shows signs of the enterprise of its Anglo-Saxon inhabitants. I slept there only one night. My room was on the ground floor. I found the four legs of my bed placed in as many basins of water. I inquired the reason, and was informed that it was to prevent the ants, which are not nautically inclined, from getting into it and devouring the inhabitant in his sleep. Peter's bed, which was in the corner of the room, was similarly guarded, and Ready very wisely jumped up and slept on the foot of it.

The next morning Peter got up to procure water for me for washing, and to perform other duties of a valet; but scarcely had he donned his clothes than I saw him jumping and twisting about, and slapping himself in the most eccentric manner.

"Oh dear! oh dear! I shall be eaten, I shall be eaten!" he exclaimed, slapping himself harder and harder.

Ready barked, not knowing what to make of it, and jumped back on the bed again. Peter set to work to tear off his clothes, which he had placed on a chair, and of which a colony of ants had taken possession. He shook them out by hundreds, and then rushing out, he returned with a broom, with which he cleared the boards. The people of the house were rather astonished at my insisting on having a tub of cold water. which

Peter at length brought me, and I managed to dress without being devoured by the ants.

Two hours after this we were rattling away along the corduroy road in a mail waggon, with a Kentuckian driver, through the forests of Texas. It was not altogether a pleasant style of locomotion, for we were bumped about terribly, our vehicle being innocent of springs; but it had the advantage of novelty. We stopped at nights at settlers' huts, and slept on the roughest of rough beds, and sometimes without any beds at all except the bare boards and our cloaks; but I had made up my mind to grumble at nothing short of being scalped or positively starved. I had brought a saddle with me from England, and had procured another at Galveston for Peter, with the intention of purchasing at the first opportunity horses for riding and for carrying the luggage and tent, and starting away across country. I mentioned my intention to my Kentuckian driver, Silas Slag by name.

"Then I guess, stranger, that you don't care very much about your scalp," he observed, with a wink of his eye, as he made a significant gesture round his head.

"Why, who do you suppose would venture to take my scalp?" I asked, thinking that he was quizzing me, and wishing to turn the tables on him. "Don't you know that if any one injures an Englishman, the British government will hunt him out, in whatever part of the world he may be, and make him pay dearly for his folly?"

"I guess, stranger, that the Comanches, or any other Red-skin varmint, care no more for your British government than I do, and that is about as much as that ranther there does for your dog."

As Silas spoke, he pointed to a huge creature, which, half concealed by the tangled underwood of a tropical forest, lay crouching down about twenty yards ahead of us, and apparently prepared to spring out as we passed.

I had turned Ready out to stretch his legs, and he, unconscious of danger, was running on in high glee, abreast of the horses. In another instant he would have been in the jaws of the wild beast. I called to him to come to me, and at the same time lifted my rifle from the bottom of the waggon to be ready to fire. Silas whipped on his horses in the hopes of passing the creature before he could make his spring, but the animals, aware of the approach of an enemy, began to plunge and kick, and drove the waggon against some stumps of trees amid which the road wound, with a force which sent Peter sprawling at the bottom of it, and at the same instant the panther, with a tremendous bound, sprang on one of the leaders. The poor brute struggled so violently, that I was afraid of wounding it instead of killing the panther if I fired. At last I got a fair aim at the wild beast's head, and to my infinite satisfaction over he rolled dead. The horses stood trembling in every limb, but I was afraid that they would dash on, before we could put the harness to rights, and leave us in the lurch. Once more, however, we were on the road, through a forest composed of oaks, maples, acacias, sycamores, and other trees with which I was familiar, and many others to be found in the tropics alone, interlaced with all sorts of creepers. On either side were a vast variety of flowers of every bright hue, but the most attractive were the red and white blossoms of the cotton trees, which, waving to and fro in the breeze, were dazzling to look at, while humming-birds, butter-

flies, and insects innumerable made the air appear as if filled with the most gorgeous gems. All this sort of scenery was very interesting, but I was not sorry when we reached the town of Billyville, I think it was called, bordering the prairies, where I was told that I could purchase horses, and find a trustworthy guide for my farther progress.

The name of Billyville was not significant of a very important place, nor had the town any great pretension of any sort, as it consisted of a few rough huts, while the surrounding fields were full of the stumps of the trees which had been cut down. I bought the horses required, and on the evening of my arrival a thin wiry little fellow presented himself, saying that his occupation was that of a hunter, and that he could guide me safely through any part of the North American continent. Whether he considered himself a white man or a Red-skin I could not tell, while he spoke English, Spanish, and French with great volubility, though absurd as to correctness, and asserted that there was not an Indian dialect with which he was not acquainted. His garments were of fine tanned leather and ornamented with coloured threads and beads, while a straw hat covered his head. I inquired of Silas Slag if he knew anything of him. He said that he believed that he was honest, and that he had the character of being a very brave fellow and a successful hunter. He was the sort of man I wanted, so I engaged Mr. Jack Lion, as he called himself in English, with an Indian to assist in taking care of the horses. An old man and a young one now joined our party, and took our vacated places in the waggon.

We were to accompany the mail another day's journey before we turned off to the north, where Mr.

Lion informed me I should find numbers of buffaloes and other large game.

"Well, I shall be sorry to part from you, stranger," said Silas Slag, as I rode alongside him on my trusty little steed. "I hope you'll come to no harm, but you'll just remember that while you're shooting buffaloes there'll be people maybe looking out to shoot you. Those Comanches are terrible wild chaps, and you never know where they may turn up."

We had now entered a most desolate-looking prairie country. We had lost sight of the forest through which we had been travelling, and there appeared before us only one uniform level of dry waving grass. As we rode on, I saw some white objects glittering in the sun ahead. Getting up to them, I found that they were two human skulls and other bones. There they lay grinning at each other. Near one was the barrel and lock of a gun. Close to the other was a hatchet and a scalping-knife, and several tips of arrows. A tale was thus told me of how a white man and an Indian had met, and fought, and died on that spot. I had dismounted to examine these miserable relics, speaking of human sin and folly, when Silas cried out—

"Look there, stranger; look there Jack Lion! What do you say to those black spots out there? Are they birds, buffaloes, or Red-skins?"

The hunter stood up in his stirrups and took a long steady gaze in the direction Silas pointed, just as a sailor does when he is looking out for an enemy's cruiser at sea. Suddenly dropping into his saddle, he exclaimed, "Comanches! And they are coming this way."

"Then they'll scalp every mother's son of us," cried Silas, lashing on his horses.

"Keep together, my men, at all events," I exclaimed, as my companions began to move on; and away we dashed at a rapid rate.

We had not gone far, however, when, on turning my head, I discovered that we were pursued, and that the strangers were coming up with us. I desired Lion to take another look at them, and to tell me what he thought they were.

"Comanches," he answered, "Comanches, there's no doubt about it."

"Is there any place we can hope to reach where we can defend ourselves better than in the open plain?" I asked.

"None, none that I know of," was the answer.

"Then let us halt at once, before we have exhausted our strength, and fight it out like men," said I.

My companions listened to my appeal. Silas stopped his horses, and unharnessing them, placed them at one end of the waggon, while we secured our steeds at the other end. A few boxes and bales which the waggon contained, with some stout poles ready in case of necessity to repair it, were tumbled out, and with them we formed a very imperfect barricade for our defence. Scarcely were our fortifications finished than the hoarse voices of the Indians uttering their war-whoops were borne down to our ears on the breeze. They approached. There could be no doubt about their intentions. They were in their war-paint. Brandishing their gaily ornamented spears with horrible shrieks, which I own, in spite of my resolution, made me feel very uncomfortable, on they came on their mustangs at full tilt towards us. We cocked our rifles and stood ready to receive them, resolving if they wanted our scalps to make them pay dearly before they got them.



CHAPTER VI.

ON THEY COME—ORDER OF BATTLE—NUMBERS PREVAIL—READY
AND PETER SAVE MY SCALP—UNLOOKED-FOR AID—OUR WOUNDS
ARE DRESSED—SHELTER ON THE VERGE OF CIVILIZATION.

THE two skulls were still in view, as the shrieks of the Comanches grew louder and louder, and the sight of these mouldering relics determined our party to conquer or to perish in the attempt. On came the Comanches, their mustangs at full gallop, and their gay trappings fluttering in the breeze. Their object was, apparently, to alarm and unnerve us before they approached. I looked round at the countenances of my companions, to judge how far I could depend on them. Ready was the most pugnacious, as he stood up with his front paws on a chest, growling and snarling. There was a dogged resolution in Peter's face, which satisfied me that he would fight to the death; while Silas Slag and Senior Jack Lion were sufficiently cool and determined to make me feel I could depend on them. The other men looked as if they wished that they were anywhere else, but at the same time would stand to their colours if their comrades did.

“Now, lads, reserve your fire till I give the word,”

I exclaimed. "Let each of you select his man. Fire one after the other, not all together on any account, and it will be hard if each of us don't hit his man. Load again as fast as you can, and be ready for the rest who may venture to come on."

What I said encouraged my companions, and the plan which had at that moment suggested itself to me gave me a confidence I had not before felt.

"Now, all steady," I cried. "You, Silas Slag, will fire first, Jack Lion next, I will take the third and fourth shots with my double-barrel. Peter, you follow me, Sam Noakes next, and, Paul, don't fire till your father has shot his man."

The Indians had got within fifty yards of us, imagining that they would make us an easy prey. I gave the word. Silas looked calmly along his rifle. He fired, and as the smoke cleared away, an Indian was seen to fall from his horse. Jack Lion's trigger was pulled an instant afterwards, with the same success. I felt terribly cool; not at all as if I was about to take the life of one or more human beings. I have been far more flurried when a pheasant has got up close under my nose. Two of our enemies had fallen. I fired both my barrels, and two more mustangs were galloping away without riders. Still the Indians came on. Peter showed that my instructions had not been thrown away on him. He fired with steadiness, and though the Indian at whom he aimed still sat his horse, the lance he held fell from his hand. One of our party missed altogether, but the rest hit, if they did not kill, the Indians they had picked out. Silas, Lion, and I had our pieces reloaded before our enemies were upon us. With terrific shrieks they came close up to us, when we each knocked over another of the yelping

band. This was more than they expected, and having endeavoured in vain to leap their steeds over the barricade which protected us, they wheeled round and galloped off to a distance.

Our party shouted with satisfaction, but we soon perceived that our foes had not retreated. After hovering about for some time, and apparently consulting together, they again formed a dense body and advanced at full speed towards us. Hoping that the same plan we had before adopted would succeed, we were waiting to fire, when the horsemen, separating, swept round to the right and left with the evident intention of taking us in the rear. Though there was no barricade on that side, we had the waggon to protect us; but then our horses were exposed, and might either be killed or carried off.

"We are in a fix, I guess," exclaimed Silas Slag; "but never say die, lads; I have been in a worse one than this, and am still alive." This address infused new courage into the rest of the men.

The Indians, finding that our small band was far more formidable than they expected, had become very wary, and kept hovering around on every side, just beyond reach of our rifles. Round and round they swept, making various feints, for the purpose of wearing out our courage, I suppose. This, however, gave us time to make further preparations for their reception.

By cutting some holes in the awning of the waggon, and replacing a few chests and bags on one side of it, we turned it into a little fortress, likely to prove of service against enemies on horseback, armed only with spears and bows and arrows. Our chief cause for fear was, that some of them might dismount, when they

would be much more formidable at close quarters. They did not, however, seem inclined to attempt such a proceeding. Now with loud shrieks they advanced, and then wheeling round, off they went as if in full flight, but in another moment they were again advancing towards us with threatening gestures. I thought they would turn, but no; on they came from each quarter of the compass, shouting, shrieking, and flourishing their spears. The next instant a flight of arrows came flying among us, compelling us to sink down under our barricade to avoid them. This was no easy matter. One grazed my shoulder, and another went through Peter's hat, and for a moment I thought he was wounded.

"Fire, lads!" I shouted, "steady as before." I, with two of the men, sprang into the waggon to receive our enemies, and as they approached, we fired in quick succession; but, very naturally, our aim was not so steady as before, and still on they came, shrieking terrifically.

As the Indians got within thirty paces of us, without stopping the speed of their mustangs, they for an instant dropped their lances, and grasping their bows, let fly another shower of arrows. Then on they came more rapidly than before. I did not look round to see who was struck. I felt a sharp pang in my side where an arrow was quivering. I trusted that it was not poisoned; it had come through the tilt of the waggon. I had no time to draw it out, for the point of a red warrior's spear was close to me. I had fired one barrel, but I had the second loaded. I pulled the trigger. The Indian sprang forward, the spear passed on one side, and he fell dead at my feet, while his horse, turning aside, galloped off.

Our men had all fired, and three Indians lay dead in

front of us. But though the front rank had wheeled round, the rest were coming on with furious gestures of vengeance. Our little band was also sadly diminished.

For an instant, not hearing Silas Slag's voice, I turned my head. He lay writhing on the ground, with an arrow through his breast, which he was in vain attempting to drag out, while another man, though he still stood at his post, seemed badly wounded with a spear-thrust in his neck. The pain in my side was increasing so much, that I every instant expected to drop fainting to the ground.

I got out of the waggon, for in a hand-to-hand encounter I could fight longest in an open space. I knew that it would be destruction to yield, so I instantly began reloading my rifle, while I shouted to my companions to struggle to the last. They were doing their best to keep the Indians at bay while I reloaded. Again I fired; my aim was unsteady; and I killed the horse instead of the rider. The animal fell directly in front of me, and served as a barricade, but the Indian, disengaging himself, drew his scalping-knife from his girdle and sprang towards me.

Weak, and suffering intense pain, I could do little to help myself, and thought that my last moments had come when, just as the Red-skin was about to plunge his weapon in my breast, Ready, who had been watching by my side, with a fierce growl flew at his throat, and compelled him to turn the intended blow on one side, and the next moment the butt of Peter's musket came crashing down on his head and stunned him. The rest of the party, still able to stand up, were engaged in single combat with the more daring of our adversaries, while other Indians were flocking round,

either thrusting at us with their spears, or with arrows in the string, standing ready to shoot as opportunity might offer.

Now, indeed, I had lost all hope of escaping. More Indians were galloping up, when, through a gap in their ranks, as I stood with one foot on the dead horse, I caught sight in the distance of another body of horsemen moving at full speed across the prairie.

Had I till now entertained even the slightest hopes of resisting our foes, this circumstance made me feel that such hopes were vain; still "the never-say-die principle" made me resolve to fight to the last, and my companions, I saw, were resolved to do the same.

We were, indeed, in a desperate plight. One man was killed outright, Silas appeared to be mortally wounded, and I expected every instant to drop. I heard the Indians shouting to each other—I thought probably to make short work of us. Suddenly they wheeled round and galloped off, as I concluded, to wait till they were joined by the fresh band we saw approaching, when they would again come on and crush us at once. Again I loaded and fired, but it was a last effort; overcome with pain and loss of blood, I fell fainting behind the dead horse, which had served as a barricade.

In vain I tried to rise. I heard the men about me shouting and firing; then there was a loud tramping of horses; the shouts grew louder. In another instant I expected to feel my scalp whipped off my head. In that moment I lived an age. I should have been glad to have lost all consciousness. Had I been able to fight bravely, even against odds so fearful, I should have been content; but to lie helpless at the mercy of savages was terrible. I had heard of the tortures they

were wont to inflict on their captives, and I expected to have to endure some such ordeal to try my courage.

On came the horsemen. Voices struck my ear, but they were familiar sounds. The words were mostly English. I opened my eyes. They fell not on Red-skin savages, but on a party of white men, well armed with rifles and pistols, and broadswords or cutlasses.

"On after the varmint!" shouted one, who seemed to be the leader. "Some of you lads stay by these people. Doctor, there's work for you, I guess."

While most of the horsemen, to the number of fifty at least, galloped after the flying Indians, some few dismounted and came within our camp.

"Why, lads, you seem to be in a bad way," observed one of them.

"I guess if you hadn't come, we shouldn't have had a scalp on the top of our heads," was the answer. "There's the captain dead, and Silas Slag, the next best man, no better off; for, if he isn't dead, he'll be before many minutes are over."

"We'll see," said a stranger, whom I guessed to be a surgeon, approaching the spot where poor Silas lay groaning with agony. "Take your hands off the arrow, boy. You'll not get it out that way. Many a man has lived with a worse wound than that through him. Here, some of you, lend a hand."

I just lifted myself on my side, and saw the young surgeon engaged with his instrument in cutting out the arrow from Silas's body. The poor fellow groaned, but did his utmost to refrain from giving full expression to the agony he was undergoing.

"It will be my turn next," I thought to myself. "I must nerve myself for the suffering I must endure."

I waited till the wounds of all the men had been attended to.

"There's the dead captain on the other side," said one. I had been dubbed captain by my companions.

The surgeon came up to me.

"I'm not quite dead yet," I murmured. "Just pull this ugly stick out of me, and I hope to do well."

"No fear of that, captain," said the stranger.

"Here, lads, some of you hold him down. It's an unpleasant operation, but it's necessary."

The surgeon was skilful, but I own that my nerves got such a twinge that I would rather not dwell on the subject.

Our new friends now set to work to get us into marching order. One of our party had been killed, and another wounded, besides Silas Slag, who was in a very precarious condition, and I was very considerably hurt. The Indians had carried off four of our horses, but as six of their number lay dead on the field, and others were badly wounded, they had paid dearly for their success. Fortunately none of the waggon horses were missing. They were harnessed, and we began to move. Silas Slag and another man who had been hurt were placed in the waggon with me. Some spirits was poured down my throat, and after a time I recovered sufficiently to ask questions. I found that the horsemen who had arrived so opportunely to our rescue were in search of the very band of Comanches that had attacked us. Those predatory Red-skins had attacked a party of Texians travelling across the prairie, and were said to have killed all the men, and to have carried off a white girl as prisoner. She was the daughter of one of the murdered men, an old officer of the United States army,

and, I was told, was possessed of great personal attractions.

On hearing this, all the romance in my composition was instantly aroused. I regretted my wound more because it kept me a prisoner than on any other account, and longed to be in the saddle and in pursuit of the savages to aid in rescuing the poor girl. We were on our way back to the settlement to which she belonged, but of those who had come to our rescue, the doctor and the greater number were pushing forward after their companions. They had vowed vengeance on the marauders, and were likely to execute it in a terrible manner if they succeeded in overtaking them.

It was dark before we reached the nearest shelter. It was a farm-house on the very verge of civilization, surrounded with stockades to guard against a sudden attack of Indians. The inhabitants, who were of German descent, though speaking English, received us with kind expressions, and had Silas and me and the other wounded man carried into their largest sleeping-room, where beds were placed for us, into which we were put at once. The mistress of the house then came with ointments, and with the greatest tenderness dressed our wounds, and afterwards brought us some light and nourishing food, of which we stood in great need.

"I can feel for you, stranger," she remarked to me, as she sat watching like a mother by my bedside. "I had a son wounded by the Red-skins many years ago. He came home, poor boy, to die. The young girl, too, carried off by the savages, is a relation. I tremble to think what her fate may be. All the men of our family, even my husband, old as he is, and my sons

and grandsons, are gone in pursuit of the enemy. Altogether there are twenty of them from this farm alone. Ah me! I shall rejoice when they come back. It is anxious work waiting for them. I have lost in my time so many kindred and acquaintance through the treachery of these Red-skins, that I always dread what may happen."

I did my best to comfort the kind old lady, and told her that as our small party had been able to keep them so long at bay, there could be little doubt that a well-armed band, such as her friends formed, would have little difficulty in conquering them.

The night, however, passed away, and nothing was heard of the party. Neither the following day were any tidings received. The anxiety of the poor women, of whom there were a considerable number in and about the farm, became very great. People from various other locations also came crowding in, chiefly women, whose husbands and sons had gone on the expedition, to make inquiries. Some, indeed, began to express their fears that the party had fallen into an ambush and been cut off. Such things had occurred before. I was already better, and only wanted strength. I offered, if men could be found, to head a party to go out in search of the missing band.

"They will be here by nightfall," said the old lady, trying to comfort herself.

I felt, from the remarks I had heard made, considerable doubt about this, and could not help fearing that some catastrophe had occurred. Two whole days passed away, and still there was no tidings of the missing ones.



CHAPTER VII.

OUR DELIVERERS PURSUE THE COMANCHES, BUT FAIL TO RETURN
—I AM CONVALESCENT AND HEAD A PARTY IN SEARCH—THERE
IS A LADY IN THE CASE—STORES FOR CAMP—TONY FLACK'S
TALE OF THE "INJUNS."

Day after day passed away, and no tidings of the expedition. Under the care of my kind hostess I quickly recovered from the effects of my wound, from which I suffered wonderfully little, and I began to hope that in another day or two I might be fit to mount a horse, and set off to the assistance of the settlers. While I lay on my bed I had plenty of time for thinking. Among other things, I began to regret that I had been turned aside from my original purpose of ascending the Mississippi. I never like to be thwarted in anything I undertake, and on this occasion I felt that I had allowed fear to influence me. I thought this so unworthy of

me that, "as soon as I have brought my present adventure to a conclusion," I said to myself, "I will go back and steam up the mighty river; and any slave-owner or slave-dealer who dares to stop me shall pay dear for his temerity." I told Peter and Ready of my determination. The latter wagged his tail and seemed highly pleased, though I suspect he thought I was speaking of going home. The former said that he was willing to go wherever I wished, and, if needs be, would fight by my side as long as he could stand up.

"I know you would, Peter," said I. "Indeed we shall probably have something to try your courage before then."

I was right in this conjecture. The party which had gone in pursuit of the Comanches did not return, and their friends becoming anxious about them, began to assemble from all directions on horseback, and well armed. By this time I was able to leave my room, and when they heard that an Englishman was ready to take the command of the party, they all expressed a wish to have me at their head, and to set out immediately. Weak as I was I determined to go. My kind hostess showered blessings on my head when I told her so. I could only reply that I should better merit them if I returned successful.

We were to set off the next morning. Another night's rest would increase my strength, or might perhaps see the return of the former expedition. I went to see Silas Slag before starting.

"Well, you Britishers can sometimes put the best leg foremost, I, see," he observed as he took my hand, and pressed it with a warmth I did not expect. "You ain't far behind us free and independent Americans, I guess. I wish I could go with you; and

so I would, if it wasn't for the big hole which that Comanche made between my ribs. I'd like to go for your sake, and to help to find the young gal those varmint have carried off."

I thanked Silas heartily for his friendly feelings, and assured him that I shouldn't wish to have a better man by my side. In truth, I have seldom found Americans wanting in bravery or generosity.

Daybreak found me in the saddle, surrounded by fifty well-armed men; young and old, white, brown, and black; with Peter mounted on a raw-boned steed at my side, and Ready—looking as if he well knew what was in the wind—at my heels. My army was somewhat variously armed: some had muskets, others rifles, others blunderbusses, and others only spears and pistols; while the swords were of all shapes, from Spanish Toledo, to English cutlasses and broadswords. The costumes of my followers were of the same diversified character, as were the accoutrements of the horses and the steeds themselves, but as the men mostly looked ready for work I was satisfied. We had secured a half-caste Indian for a guide, whose parents had been killed and scalped by the Comanches; so he was anxious that we should fall in with them. I must own that I chiefly thought about the young woman who had been carried off, and I hoped that no disaster might have happened to the brave men who had preserved my life and that of my companions at the moment we were almost overpowered. Each of us carried his provisions and cooking utensils at his saddle-bow, as well as a cloak or blanket in which to sleep at night. Every man had his axe in his belt, and a long knife for cutting grass, so that we were provided for a campaign even should it take a month or more.

We pushed on as fast as we could move, making, through the open prairie, full thirty miles each day. We thus travelled a hundred miles; but still there was no sign of our friends or the Comanches. Our guides assured us that the former must be ahead, but, as to the Indians, it was impossible to say where they were. Any moment they might appear on our flanks or rear, and, unless we were well prepared, overwhelm us by their numbers. We, of course, kept a careful watch at night, and sent out scouts as we advanced.

We were soon completely in the desert, and might at any moment be attacked by our enemies. Had our animals been capable of pushing on without stopping, I believe that we should have done so, from the intense eagerness all felt to ascertain what had become of their friends; but my companions were too practical to attempt this. They well knew that "the more haste the less speed." We therefore camped regularly, and only travelled at stated hours, as if we were in no way in a hurry. This somewhat slow progress was very trying to my temper, although, had we attempted to go faster, we should have knocked up our steeds, and been unable to progress at all.

The time, however, spent while camping, was not occupied unpleasantly. Most of the party had led wild, roving lives, had followed various vocations, and gone through strange adventures, which they were not prevented by bashfulness from recounting. They were not in a mood to sing, but one after the other narrated the most wonderful events, in which, as a rule, they were the chief actors,—grizzly bears, panthers, buffaloes, and rattlesnakes being part of the *dramatis personæ*.

We had several articles of food which were new to

me, all as little bulky as possible, and qualified to keep a long time. We had some dried meat, procured from the Mexicans. They prepare it by cutting the meat while fresh into long strips, when it is hung on a line to dry in the sun and wind until it becomes thoroughly hardened. Sometimes it is smoked and dried, with a slow fire underneath, as are dry fish in England. It will, when prepared in either of these ways, keep for a long time. We had another article of food called *Penole*, which is made by parching Indian corn, then grinding it, and mixing it with cinnamon and sugar. A third, called *Atole*, is also worthy of mention. It is a kind of meat which, when prepared in a peculiar way, appears and tastes very like what the Americans call *Mush*. Mush, again, is simply maize, or Indian corn, boiled in water. *Penole* is especially valuable for travellers, as it requires no fire to cook it, being prepared in a minute by simply mixing it with cold water. In proportion to its weight it occupies very little space, but when prepared for use, swells to twice its former bulk. A very small quantity at a time is therefore sufficient to satisfy hunger. We had, besides, coffee and brown sugar as our chief beverage. I mention these things to show that some forethought had been exercised before starting.

As I said, we were attired in a variety of costumes, but the most common dress was a check or "hickory" shirt, buck-skin pants, a fringed hunting-shirt of the same material, gaily lined with red flannel, and ornamented with brass buttons. A coarse broad-brimmed straw hat covered the head, while the feet and legs were cased in strong cow-hide boots, reaching to the knee. Each man carried at his saddle-bow a porous leathern water-bottle. When hung up in the sun ju

enough of the liquid exuded deliciously to cool the rest, and in that climate this was a great luxury.

Our progress was in part directed by the places at which water could be procured. Before nightfall we prepared to camp. We first turned our horses out to feed, but as soon as it grew dark they were brought in and picketed in the centre, while we, with our saddles as pillows, lay down in the form of a square outside them, eight or ten men on each side, while the rest watched as scouts in advance. Thus several nights passed away. Our chief apprehension arose from the possibility that the Comanches, discovering our camp, might make an attack during the night on it with overwhelming numbers, and ride over us before we were prepared to receive them.

An old hunter who accompanied us gave me a vivid description of such a scene, when he was one of the few of his party who had escaped. He went by the name of Tony Flack. He was a gaunt, parchment-skinned, wizened individual, with a most lachrymose expression of countenance, which, however, did not exhibit his real character, for he was rather a merry fellow at bottom, but his jollity took some time in appearing. As a Yankee remarked, "I guess he takes a long time to pump it up." He, in fact, did not begin to laugh till the subject of the conversation had been changed.

"I guess that was an awful time," he began. "We'd just got into the big sandy desert, not far off from here; there was fifty of us at least, and we were all a-lying down, having no more fear of Injuns than of so many heffers, when there was a whirl and a rush just as if the Falls of Niagara and St. Anthony was running a race.

"'It's a stampedo!' shouted one. I looked up.

There I saw in the moonlight a thousand warriors, their white shields and spears glistening in the moonbeams, as they galloped right down upon us. Some of our men sprang to their feet, and attempted to defend themselves; but the savages darted on and cut them down, and ran them through in a moment. I was so much astonished that I rolled over with my saddle above my head, and this, I guess, saved my scalp, for most of my companions lost theirs. I thought the mass of warriors would never have done passing. Not one of their horses touched my body, but the loud trampling continued, and the shrieks and cries of my companions rang in my ears as the spears of our assailants went through them, or they were trampled on by their mustangs. At last the noise of the tramping ceased, though I could hear the shouts of the Indians in the distance as they drove off our horses. I knew their ways, and that some of them would certainly return before long to take our scalps. I lifted my head up from under my saddle, and seeing no one moving, I crept away towards some rocks which I had observed before night closed in at a little distance from the camp. I was afraid of speaking, lest any Indians might have remained near—indeed, I thought that all my companions were killed. On I crept, scarcely daring to lift my head above the ground, lest I should be seen. I endeavoured also not to move a stone, or a bush, for fear of being heard. More than once I stopped to listen, fancying that some one was approaching. I did, however, reach the rock, and scarcely had I got behind it, than I again heard the trampling of horses, and then once more arose the fearful shrieks of some of my companions who had remained alive, and whom the savages had now returned to scalp. I wasn't

much given to fainting, even in those days, but I nearly lost my senses as I heard the dreadful cries of my friends, and thought how narrowly I had escaped from the same fate, and that even now it might overtake me. I dared scarcely to breathe till I heard the Indians once more retreating. At daylight I crept out cautiously from my shelter; no one was moving. I advanced towards our camp. I have seen many dreadful sights, but never one more horrid than I then gazed upon. There lay the bodies of my companions; the heads of all of them had been robbed of their hair scalps, while the ground was stained with blood from their wounds. Most of the arms and property had been carried off, but there was food enough and to spare. I loaded myself with as much as I could carry, and, to my great satisfaction, I found a rifle with ammunition which had been dropped. I must now, I concluded, find my way back to the States as best I could. I had begun my march eastward, when I heard a foot-fall. I started, expecting to see a scalping knife whirling over my head. My heart leaped with joy when I saw one of my friends. He, like me, had escaped and hid himself before the return of the Indians. We trudged on together across the desert, often thinking that we should never get back to our friends; but we succeeded at last. For some months I fancied that I should never again set my face to go westward, but in time I got tired of a quiet life, and have lived out in these parts pretty well ever since."

Just as the speaker ceased a cloud of dust was seen in the distance, and out of it emerged our scouts galloping at headlong speed.



CHAPTER VIII.

OUR FRIENDS BESIEGED—WE SURPRISE THE COMANCHES—OUR VICTORY, AND OUR FRIENDS RELIEVED—WHAT THEY HAD SUFFERED—THE YOUNG GIRL RESTORED TO HER HOME.

“FORWARD!” was the word, and our whole troop galloped on, eager for the information the scouts could give us. We pulled up as they drew near. At first all we could make out were the words, “The Comanches are there; on, on! our friends are well-nigh done for.” I ordered a halt, that we might hear more exactly the information they had obtained, and have

time to form a plan of operation with calmness and judgment. They had found themselves, from indubitable signs, in the presence of a numerous band of Indians. Soon the sound of firing reached their ears. Two of them, leaving their horses with the rest, crept forward on foot, till they caught sight of a rocky mound partly covered with trees. The Indians surrounded this mound, and on the top of it some sort of fortification had been thrown up, which they had no doubt was held by our missing friends. From the slow way, however, in which they were firing, it was very evident that their ammunition was almost exhausted, and that in a short time longer their fate would be sealed. The Indians seemed aware of this, for, though completely besetting the hill, they kept close under shelter at a distance, only showing themselves when they had to advance to get a shot at the besieged. One thing was certain—there was not a moment to be lost; for, even while we were advancing, the savages might make one of their fierce onslaughts, and destroy our friends. Still, the very greatest caution was necessary. The enemy far outnumbered us, and were brave and wary. It was advisable, if possible, to take them by surprise, an undertaking of no ordinary difficulty, as Tony Flack observed, in his peculiar way, when I proposed it: "Cap'n, did you ever catch a weasel asleep? No, I guess; then you'll not catch these here red-skinned varmints, when they know an enemy's not far off."

However, there was nothing like trying. I first ascertained from our guides and the scouts the line of country which afforded most shelter, and then directed them to lead us along it. Though speed was important, concealment, till we could make a rush at the Indians, was still more so; and I therefore ordered, as we got

nearer, all the men to dismount, and to lead their horses, one following another, in single file, so that there would be less risk of our being perceived. I threw out scouts at the same time, that we might not ourselves be surprised. As we advanced, we listened anxiously for the sound of firing, to assure us that our friends were still holding out. Not hearing any shots, I was considering whether we ought not to mount and dash on all risks, when one of my companions assured me that there was no hurry, that the Indians were too wary to attack the fort till long after our friends had ceased firing, and that very likely they would attempt to starve them out. Thus reassured, we cautiously continued our progress as before. Our well-trained horses seemed to understand the necessity for silence, and, it appeared to me, trod as cautiously as any of the party. At last, emerging from a valley, the report of a musket-shot reached our ears; another and another followed; they sounded louder and louder; we knew that at all events our friends were still holding out, and, what was of infinite consequence, that the Indians would be so engaged in front, that they would probably not discover our approach in their rear. But a thin belt of wood intervened between us and the enemy. I called a halt. Every man looked to the priming of his rifle and pistols, and felt that his sword drew easily from the scabbard. At a word they sprang into their saddles. Still I was unwilling to order a charge till we had got so close that we could not fail to be discovered. Ready, indeed, very nearly betrayed us, by barking at an Indian dog which strayed up to us, and I had to call him off, to prevent a combat, but not without difficulty, as he seemed highly delighted at having found an antagonist worthy of his prowess.

We now pushed steadily on ; not a shot was fired from the fort. We guessed, and rightly, that our friends' powder was expended. The Indians redoubled their fire, and with terrific yells were pushing on in dense masses towards the fort.

" They have calculated to a nicety the quantity of ammunition used, and they know that it is all expended," observed the person who rode next me. The Indians were, apparently, not much better supplied with powder and shot. We could see our friends springing to the ramparts to receive the savages, who were rushing up the hill-side in overwhelming numbers, intent on taking the scalps of those who had so long resisted their attacks. In a few minutes more, there could be little doubt that none of our friends would have been left alive. We had reached the very edge of the wood, and as we were full in view of the savages, we should have been perceived by them, had they not been so intent on the attack as not to turn their heads towards us. Our friends might have seen us, but they took us, we guessed, for a fresh body of their foes. The time was come agreeably to undeceive them. Forming my party by signs in close ranks, I led them slowly on, so as to get still nearer, if possible, before we commenced our charge. The frightful yells of the savages prevented their usually quick ears from detecting the footfall of our horses. I looked round at my men. Their knees were pressed tight to their saddles ; their teeth were firm set ; their heads, with their eyes wide open, were bent forward : their hands grasped their swords. Already, in anticipation, the onslaught had commenced. There was no necessity for longer holding them in. I shook my reins, and waved my sword. We should be among the foe while our horses were

fresh and vigorous. On we dashed. We could no longer restrain from giving way to a loud shout. The Red-skins heard it and turned their heads. Our friends heard it too, and, recognising us, returned it with a will ; but their voices sounded weak and faint. The Indians who were climbing the hill sprang down to join their companions, who hurried together in a mass to oppose us ; but they seemed to be a mob without a leader, and, unaccustomed to fight except on horseback, they were utterly unprepared to withstand a charge of horsemen. We galloped towards them on their front ; our friends rushing down from the hill, attacked them furiously in flank. In another instant we were upon them. The front ranks stood bravely, and seizing our horses' reins, endeavoured to grapple with us ; but we shook them off, and cut them down, and went on riding through and through them, till the greater number fled on every side. Some fought to the last, trying to wound us and our horses ; with most of these our friends on foot settled ; we disposed of the rest, and then galloped on in pursuit of the flying multitude. I shouted to my men to keep together, for I caught sight of a group of horses, held by Indians, in the distance ; and I knew that if we could capture them, we should have little difficulty in overtaking the men on foot. Unfortunately several of my party, unaccustomed to discipline, had scattered on either side in pursuit of the flying fo. Some of the Indians had turned to bay, and were fighting furiously with them, and more than one man was wounded or unhorsed by the savages. In the meantime, the Indians who held the horses seeing us coming, mounted and galloped off at full speed, the whole stud following them at a rate which precluded all hopes of their being overtaken.

Our victory was complete, but an important object would be lost unless we could make prisoners of some chiefs or leading men, whom we might hold as hostages for the delivery of the people who had been first carried off. We were by this time at some distance from the hill, at the foot of which our friends were assembled. I shouted to all my followers, who were considerably scattered, to assemble round me, and directed them, having fixed on three or four of the fugitives, who by their costume we supposed might be chiefs, to ride after them and to take them prisoners. All were, however, by this time at a considerable distance. Three of the Indians we pursued managed to catch some of the horses galloping round, and leaping on their backs were soon out of sight. One tall chief alone, who seemed to be wounded, did not attempt to fly, but leaning on his spear calmly awaited our coming. I was in great hopes of taking him without resistance, but as we got close up to him he sprang forward in a defensive attitude, thrusting his spear at us, and evidently resolved to fight to the last. He had already wounded one of our men and two of our horses, when a Spaniard, whom he was attacking, drew his pistol and fired at him. With a ferocious grin on his countenance he sprang into the air, and fell forward on his face, dead.

We now rode back to join our friends, anxious to hear an account of their adventures. The field was strewn on every side with dead bodies of Indians. We had killed nearly thirty, while two of our own men had fallen and four had been wounded. On reaching the hill we were warmly greeted by our friends, whose haggard looks told the sufferings they had endured, even before they had time to describe them. They

had, it appeared, day after day, perseveringly pursued the enemy, whose traces they were on, but with whom they could not manage to come up. At length they got within four or five miles of them, and began to entertain hopes of surprising their camp. Preparations were made, and they were actually advancing to the attack when the scouts brought in word that the Indians had disappeared. They were now well into the Indian territory, and it was necessary to advance with the greatest caution. They were in the neighbourhood of the hill where we found them, when the scouts brought word that, at a short distance off, there was a large camp of Indians containing a number of warriors, quite capable of overwhelming them. It might have been wiser to retreat, but instead of doing that they at once rode up to the top of the hill, and began throwing up fortifications from such materials as were at hand. While some were thus employed, others remained in the plain to cut forage for their horses. They themselves had but food sufficient, on reduced rations, for a week or ten days. Their scouts meantime were watching the camp of the enemy, in case any opportunity might occur for rescuing the prisoners. They soon ascertained that their hopes on this score were vain, for preparations were seen to be making for the usual mode by which the Indians torture and then execute their prisoners. Two unfortunate men were thus destroyed the next day, and on the following two more were killed. It was proposed by some of the more daring of the party to attack the camp at this period, and I think that the attempt might have been successful, but the counsels of the timid prevailed. The consequence was that two of their scouts were caught and scalped, and they found themselves closely

beset by the enemy. In this condition they had remained day after day, surrounded by such overwhelming numbers that they had no hopes of cutting their way out. The forage collected for the horses was soon consumed, and, one after the other, most of the animals died. They soon, too, had to kill more for the sake of supplying themselves with food. They had now no means of escaping, and they had made up their minds to fight to the last, and to sell their lives dearly unless relieved. Several of their number had fallen, but fewer than might have been expected.

Attacked day and night, their provisions entirely expended, with the exception of a little putrid horse-flesh, our friends were on the point of rushing out against the enemy to perish in the fight, when we were seen charging down on the enemy. Never did succour more opportunely reach a hard-pressed garrison. What was next to be done was now the question. A number of the Indian horses were still scampering about, and fortunately the greater portion were captured. We were thus able to mount all the heavier men of the party, while the stronger horses were made to carry two men each. As the day was drawing to a close before all our arrangements were made, we resolved to camp on the hill, where we could defend ourselves, rather than risk a march at night, when we might be attacked to disadvantage. Having lighted our fires, attended to our wounded, cooked our provisions, and made ourselves as comfortable as circumstances would allow, we sent our scouts as usual to give notice of the approach of an enemy. Though the Indians had been signally defeated, they still mustered we knew in the neighbourhood in numbers so overwhelming, that we could scarcely expect they would not make another

attack on us. I felt the responsibilities of my office, and could not rest, in spite of the fatigue I had gone through, more than a few minutes at a time. I rose several times during the night, and, accompanied by Ready, climbed to the top of a rock on the brow of a hill, whence I could look out on the wide extent of open country, which, with the exception of small spaces covered by woods, stretched around. Not a sound, however, was to be heard: there was not a sign, that I could discover, of a foe near us. I regretted that our expedition had not proved more successful. We had relieved our friends and gained a victory, but another important object was not attained. We had not recovered any prisoners, and the poor young girl, in whose fate I had become interested, was still a captive in the hands of the savages. Again I awoke and went to the rock. A few streaks of light were appearing in the east, and grey dawn was stealing over the landscape.

It was time to arouse the camp, and to commence our journey, unless our scouts brought in such information as might lead us to hope that we might recover any survivors among the prisoners, either by force or negotiation. I was about to utter the usual shout to awaken the sleepers, when my eye was attracted by an object moving in the distance over the plain. What it was I could not tell, till it resolved itself into a horseman galloping at full speed towards us. Presently, as the light increased, I observed some other objects still further off, moving at like speed, and which I took to be other horsemen, very probably pursuing the first. The first was seeking us—of that there could be little doubt. Not a moment was to be lost; I shouted loudly to my companions, ordering them to mount their steeds,

and follow me. Peter had run for my horse, which was picketed near. I dashed down the hill; about a dozen men followed me closely. I galloped on. The long locks of the seeming horseman, streaming in the wind, told me that a woman was approaching, while almost close behind her came eight or ten savages with their lances in rest, intent on her destruction. This made me the more eager to place myself between the lady and her pursuers. My men came on in good order, while others were hastening down the hill to their support. The stranger was fair and young. We opened our ranks to let her pass, pointing to our friends behind, and then spurred on against the Indians. Seeing that their prey had escaped them, they turned and galloped off. We sent some shots after them, and two fell dead from their saddles. The rest we pursued for some distance; but, unwilling to tire our horses, and aware of the danger of getting far from our main body, we allowed them to escape, and returned towards the hill. We found a group at the foot of it. They were surrounding the fugitive, who was no other than the young girl of whom we were in search. She had fainted when she found herself in safety among her friends. After a little time, however, she recovered, and was able to give an account of the fate of her companions. Every one of them had been tortured and murdered. She had stolen out of the tent of the chief, in which she had been confined, and, mounting the fleetest mustang of his stud, had made her escape.

There was now no reason for our remaining in the neighbourhood. We reached the settlement without any further adventure, when I had the satisfaction of restoring the young girl to her friends, and receiving their thanks.



CHAPTER IX.

I DETERMINE TO RETURN TO NEW ORLEANS—A DRUNKEN CAPTAIN
—SAM SNAG, THE MULATTO MATE—A HURRICANE AND WRECK
—A NIGHT OF HORRORS.

I HAD seen enough of life in the outskirts of Texas to satisfy me for the present, and as I had gone there, not from choice, but because it was the country I could most easily reach when it was necessary to run away from New Orleans, I felt that I could beat a retreat without loss of self-respect. Therefore, accompanied by Peter and Ready, I returned by the way I had come, without any adventure worthy of note, to Galveston.

I found a vessel, the *Weathercock*, Captain Parsons, sailing immediately for New Orleans, and, in an unfortunate moment, as it proved, took my passage in her. I supposed that after the lapse of so many months I should no longer be recognised in New Orleans, and having purposed to push up the Missis-

issippi to its sources, I did not like to be baulked, and so determined to chance it. Ready was evidently pleased at finding himself again on salt water, but poor Peter was very uncomfortable.

"I hope we shan't fall in with them black fellows as cut all our throats afore," he remarked, as he gazed on the fast-receding land. "I do wish, sir, you'd tramp it back overland to Old England."

Peter's knowledge of geography was very limited, and I thought it scarcely worth while to explain to him that he proposed an impossibility.

"It would be a long tramp, even if there were a bridge; but as there is no bridge just now, nor likely to be for some time, we must e'en go back as we came," said I. "But as we've a good many more places to see first, I cannot promise you a sight of the white cliffs of Old England for some long time to come, Peter. However, if you are afraid to go on, I will either find you employment in America, or put you on board the first homeward-bound ship we fall in with."

Peter looked up at me with a half-reproachful glance as he answered,

"No, no, sir. You wouldn't wish me to go and take service with any strangers in these foreign parts; and in the old country there's no home for me now—all those who made it home are gone. No, no, sir, you'd not wish me to leave you."

"Certainly not, my lad; but I thought that you might be afraid of going on," I remarked.

"Afraid when I am with you, sir!" he exclaimed, in a tone which showed how much his feelings were hurt at the supposition. "No, no, sir; I'll stick by you through thick and thin, now and ever, till you turn me away."

I was sure that Peter felt what he said, and setting as I do a high value on a faithful friend, however humble he may be, I assured him that he need be under no apprehension that I should part with him without his consent.

This tranquillised him, and he seemed at once to become reconciled to his life on the heaving wave.

I soon discovered that the *Weathercock* was far from deserving the character which her agents gave her of a fine clipper sea-boat, and that Captain Parsons was a different sort of person to what he had been described. He was not drunk when he came on board, but he very soon got so; and if he turned out sober in the morning, he took care very quickly to reduce himself to a condition of utter indifference to all sublunary affairs. As may be supposed, therefore, he did not make a very direct course for his destination.

While the weather remained fine, this did not so much signify, as a day or two more at sea was of little consequence to me, and I knew that we could not well miss the yellow water at the mouth of the Mississippi; but should it come on to blow—no impossible contingency—we should, I saw, be placed in a very unpleasant predicament. Still there was no help for it; the skipper would not have put back had I asked him, but very likely, in a drunken fit, might have blown my brains out, or pitched Peter overboard.

The mate was likely to prove a more formidable opponent. He was a huge Mulatto, with a villanous expression of countenance. From my first stepping on board, he seemed to have taken a dislike to me. It might have been because he saw that I was a man not likely to stand nonsense. He dared not show it to me, however; but whenever he had an opportunity, I

saw that he gave Peter a cuff and Ready a kick, which, as may be supposed, secured the latter as an enemy, though poor Peter was too kind-hearted to indulge in ill-feeling towards any human being. Sam Snag, the fellow was called, and he tyrannized over the crew, who dared not disobey his least command, and even the captain held him in awe, and disliked him; but they were necessary to each other. Sam Snag, though a good seaman, knew nothing of navigation, and therefore could not get the command of a vessel, and so he had to ship as mate, and preferred serving with a man like Parsons, whom he could govern, rather than with one who would govern him.

Why the mate had allowed the captain to get as drunk as he was puzzled me. I could not help suspecting that he had some sinister object in view.

Three days had passed since we left Galveston, and the only notable fact with regard to our navigation was, that, though we had lost sight of the land, we had made very little progress. There lay the vessel on the glassy shining sea, her sails flapping idly, but with now and then loud reports, against the masts. The captain was perfectly contented, and rather amiably-disposed towards me; for, as he sat in his little hot, stifling cabin—the atmosphere of which could not have been much under a hundred degrees—he sent his boy to ask me to come and liquor with him, and began to be very abusive when I declined the honour.

“That sneaking, white-haired, milksop of a Britisher—what business has he to refuse my civilities, I should like to know? It’s his natural pride, I guess, but I’ll pull it down a peg or two before I’ve done with him, I guess,” I heard him muttering as I sat reading on deck near the skylight under the shade of the mainsail.

He continued to drink and growl on, and as he got more and more drunk, he confused me with Snag, and abused both of us. From the language he occasionally used, and one or two expressions he let fall, I suspected that the unhappy man had fallen from a higher position in society to that which he now occupied. Now he quoted a line of Latin or Greek, and now he spoke in some Oriental language, Hindostanee or Arabic, I fancied, and swore in it fiercely, and then gave way to fits of idiotic laughter. Yes, I was certain that man had ranked as a gentleman, and now in appearance and manners he was the veriest brute under the sun.

"That's what drink has done for him," I said to myself: "or crime, and then drink to drown conscience; or probably drink produced the crime, and then, instead of repentance, came the more drink, that he might try and forget the crime. I am not in a pleasant position with the companionship of a set of ruffians. However, I have been in many a scrape before, and have got out of them. I hope that I may get out of this as well as I have done out of others."

As the day grew on, however, I became more anxious. The heat increased until it became almost unnatural and utterly insupportable, and the sky assumed a lurid, brazen hue, which struck me as indicative of an approaching hurricane, or a gale of some sort. I observed the seamen casting anxious glances every now and then at the horizon, but no move was made among them to do anything; the mate was below asleep, and the master was too drunk by this time to know whether the sky was copper-colour, black, or blue, or to care what might become of the ship and all on board.

At last, having thought over all the descriptions I

had read of hurricanes, I myself began to grow uneasy, and resolved to summon the mate, though I knew that I ran the risk of a quarrel in consequence. I put my head down the companion-hatch, and called out his name two or three times. The stifling air which came up from below made me unwilling to descend. The mate did not reply. He must be sleeping very soundly, I thought, or else he does not choose to answer. Peter, finding he did not appear, without my leave sprang down below, saying, as he did so, "I'll rouse him up a bit, sir."

"I say, mate—Mister Snag—wake up, will you? Wake up, Mister Snag," I heard him sing out.

There was no reply for a minute, and then came a cry of pain and terror, and poor Peter reappeared faster than he had gone down, with an expression of alarm on his countenance, followed by the mate, who had a thick colt in his hand, with which he was accustomed to belabour any of the crew who offended him.

"For what you make all dat row?" he exclaimed fiercely, turning to me with a threatening gesture.

"To wake you up, and remind you of your duty," I answered, in as calm a tone as I could command. "Look out there; what do you say to that sky?"

The mate gave a hurried glance round the horizon. He did not answer me, but he shouted—

"Aloft, all of ye! Furl the topsails. Let fly top-gallants sheets. Here, you —— Britisher, go to the helm, and do as I bid you. You, white boy, stand by those ropes."

There was no time for further orders.

The men flew aloft. They knew what ought to be done; but before they could do it the hurricane burst us. With desperate energy they attempted to

gather in the furiously flapping canvas. As Snag directed I turned round the spokes of the wheel, and as the ship's head was providentially pointing in the direction towards which the hurricane blew, away she flew before it, like a bird just escaping from the nets of the fowler. Had this not been the case, she would probably have instantly been thrown on her beam-ends. I had to exert all my strength to turn the wheel. I kept my eye on Snag, for not a word could I hear, as he rushed from rope to rope, hauling away with Peter on some, and letting go others.

The sails flapped and struggled with claps like thunder, as the blast caught them, till the vexed canvas tore itself out of the bolt-ropes. The masts bent and trembled, the yards strained and cracked. I looked up for a moment; I knew that the poor fellows aloft were in instant peril of their lives. They clung desperately to the yielding yards—clung for their lives—for the rent sails lashed furiously round them, and they scarcely dared to loose their hold for an instant to move in towards the masts. Most of them had lost their hats or caps, their hair was streaming out, their eyeballs starting from their heads.

A wild shriek reached my ears, even through the terrific din of the tempest. I caught a glimpse of the outer man on the fore-topsail-yard as the leech of the sail, torn to ribbons, coiled itself like some huge serpent round him, and tore him from his hold. In vain he tried to regain his hold, in vain to extricate himself—no human power could avail him. Helplessly he stretched out his arms; the fierce wind unloosened the coil of canvas, and, though grasping at a rope which eluded his hand, he was flung into the seething waters through which the brig was rushing onwards. For

one instant I caught a sight of his countenance, as, still desperately struggling for life, he dropped astern, while the vessel flew by him. The mate saw what had happened, but took not the slightest notice. I thought Peter would have jumped overboard in his eagerness to try and save the man. He threw a rope, but it was utterly useless. Even had the poor wretch caught it, it would have been torn out of his hands. When Peter was certain that the man was hopelessly lost, I saw him wring his hands in sorrow, and he was evidently giving utterance to his feelings in words, though what he said of course I could not hear.

Even the gale did not bring the wretched master to his senses, but I fancied that I could hear him singing, or rather howling away in his drunken madness, keeping up a wild concert with the creaking of the bulkheads, the rattling of the blocks, the whistling of the wind through the rigging, and the loud roar of the rising seas, as they dashed against the sides of the vessel. The mate, to do him justice, was the only man of the whole crew who remained calm and collected. How he might have behaved aloft I do not know; still I think he would have been the same. He soon saw that it was impossible for the men to furl the canvas—or, rather, that there was no canvas left for them to furl. He made a signal to them to come down off the yards. It was not given too soon. Some obeyed, and slid down on deck, but before the last two on the main topsail-yard were off it, the main-top mast, which had already been bending ready to crack, gave way and went over the side, carrying the rigging, and the yard, and the two men on it, overboard. They were not shaken off, but still they clung with all the energy of pair to the spar. It was but for a moment. There

were several loud cracks, some ropes gave way, the bolts which secured the shrouds to the side were drawn, and the whole mass of rigging, parting from the side, floated astern. In vain the men shrieked for help; in vain they held out their hands to us imploringly; no help could be given them, their fate might presently be ours.

The next minute the fore-topmasts went over the side, and the fore-yard came down with a crash on deck, carrying away the bulwarks, and crushing a man who had just descended from aloft, and thought he was in safety. There he lay writhing under it, and unable to extricate himself. I would have hurried to his assistance, but I dared not leave the helm, and Snag and the other men were so engaged in clearing the rest of the wreck, that they could make no attempt to lift up the yard so as to release him. It was dreadful to watch the poor fellow, as, with the movement of the ship, the heavy yard rolled on his broken limbs, inflicting the most excruciating torture. He shrieked out in his agony, entreating his companions either to release him or to put an end to his sufferings with a crowbar—so Peter told me, for his voice was borne far away from me on the wings of the hurricane. Peter, as soon as he saw what had occurred, in spite of the gestures of the mate ordering him to remain where he was, hurried forward. Still his whole strength could not, of course, move the spar; but getting hold of a handspike, he was able to prevent it from rolling over the man as often as before. Every moment the sea was rising, and as the vessel pitched more and more, the difficulty of keeping the yard off the man became greater.

At last the wreck, by means of axes and knives was cleared, and the mate had no longer an excuse for

neglecting the seaman who lay under the yard. With careless indifference he directed the other men how to lift the spar so as to drag out the sufferer.

"He's of no further use," he exclaimed (so Peter told me) when he saw the injury the man had received. "May as well heave him overboard at once. We can't mend broken legs here."

"Oh, no; no, don't now!" shrieked the poor wretch, who was probably not aware of the extent to which he was hurt. "I shall soon be well. I'll work; I'll work. Oh spare me!—spare! I am not fit to die! I'll get well and work. Will nobody save me? I can't die; I mustn't die!"

"That's what many more say, but it's of no use," growled out the mate.

Peter told me that on hearing this he could not help saying:—

"Well, if you throw that poor fellow overboard while he's got life in him, you may as well throw me and my master; for as sure as ever we get into port, we'll go and tell the magistrate of you."

The mate, with a look of surprise, gave a scornful laugh, but allowed Peter to draw the wounded man on one side, while he and the crew secured the spar, and passed life-lines forward where the bulwarks had been carried away.

I witnessed all that was taking place from my post aft, and as the mate saw that I could steer the vessel properly, he did not think fit to relieve me. I shouted to him over and over again to send a hand to the helm, but he either did not, or would not, hear me. As to where I was steering I had little conception. All I knew was that I was keeping the ship's head away from the wind, for I had not thought of looking at the

compass at first, and a block had fallen from aloft and broken in the binnacle.

The mate, I knew, was as ignorant as I was, and should the master not recover his senses, I suspected that we should have some difficulty in finding our way to New Orleans. There was a vast deal still to be done in getting the ship as much to rights as circumstances would allow, and, to do the mate justice, he worked himself, and made all under him work also.

On the ship flew under the bare stumps of the masts—they, I expected, would go next, as there were no shrouds to support them. The tortured, foaming waters rose higher and higher as the hurricane increased in strength and had longer time to affect them; and the higher the seas rose, the more the ship laboured, and the more difficult it was to steer, till my arms ached with the exertion, and I felt that if not relieved I must leave my post.

I shouted—I beckoned—to Snag, but though I was certain he saw me, he took no notice of my signs. At last Peter found his way to me, not without difficulty, and I sent him forward to summon one of the crew. The mate guessed his errand, and received him with a kick, and an order to tell me to remain where I was and make myself useful. Life is sweet, and we cling to it as long as we can; or otherwise, under the belief that the ship was hurrying to destruction, I should have thrown myself on deck, and let her broach to, which would probably at once have brought about the catastrophe. I was directing Peter to go back and help the poor wounded man, to drag him aft, if possible, and to get him down below, when there was a cry from forward. A huge sea came rolling up alongside, and (whether or not from my bad steering, I do not

know) it broke on board, and, sweeping across the fore part of the deck, carried in its grasp all it reached. Two of the crew could be seen for an instant battling with the foaming seas, as if there was a possibility of their regaining the ship.

When once more the deck was free of water, the poor wounded man had disappeared. "He was surely taken in mercy, for his sufferings would otherwise have been fearful," I said to myself. I was now glad to get Peter's assistance, which he willingly gave; while honest Ready lay at my feet, looking up every now and then into my face, and saying in his own peculiar language, "Master, I wish that I could help you; but I couldn't, I know—not if I was to try ever so much." But Ready could be of use, even on board ship. Another huge sea came up, and this time, striking the quarters, it deluged the whole after-part of the vessel. I clung to the wheel, but Peter, less prepared, lost his hold of the wheel, and was carried away. Ready, instantly comprehending his danger, dashed after him, and seizing on the leg of his trousers as he lay thrown on his back, with the certainty of either being washed overboard or drowned in the lee-skipper, dragged him up out of the water, and held him tight, till at length the mate, if not for my sake, for that of the ship, came aft to the wheel, and I was able to go to the rescue of my faithful follower.

Snag, though unconcerned for the loss of our companions, could not conceal from himself the danger we were in, and the probability that before long their fate would overtake him. He was as fierce and sulky-looking as before; but he said nothing, and I made no mark calculated to provoke his anger. The crew
I done all that was possible for the safety of the

ship, and the remnant now gathered under the after-bulwarks, awaiting what was next to happen.

The hatches had been put on, or they might possibly have gone below and turned into their berths—there to await their fate, as I have known seamen do. Night was coming on; but even that could scarcely add to the horrors of our position, except that perhaps darkness might render steering more difficult. As the mate stood alone at the helm in the gloom of evening, his hair, which was long, streaming in the wind, his neck bare, his dark countenance expressive of fierce and bad passions, his tall figure, the upper part of which was scarcely hid by the shirt—the only garment he wore besides his loose trousers—I thought that I had never seen a more perfect impersonification of some evil spirit. I scarcely, even now, like to recall the horrors of that night: the last sight on which my eyes rested was that demon-looking man steering the shattered vessel—amid the howling of the winds, the roaring of the seas—as it appeared, to inevitable destruction. Peter, Ready, and I crouched together under the bulwarks, holding on by lines secured to ring-bolts in the deck, and drenched by the seas which were constantly breaking over us. The darkness increased till it was impossible to see across the deck; nor could I even distinguish those nearest to me. The roaring waters continued sounding in my ears: frequently I felt myself under them as they broke over the ship; again I felt as if I could not possibly hold on longer, but with desperation I clutched the rope as the seas washed by, and had to be thankful that I had for the moment escaped the death which threatened me. Peter's shout, close to my ear, of "All right, sir," assured me that he and Ready had also escaped; for both were hanging

on to the same rope, the latter holding it by his teeth with might and main, evidently as sensible as we were of the perilous position in which we were placed.

Hour after hour passed by, and no change occurred in the dreary monotony of that night of horror. I think that I must have dropped asleep for an instant, strange as that may seem; for a feeling of indifference as to what might happen had stolen over me, and unconsciousness of the present, when I was startled by the cry of "She's sprung a-leak!—she's sinking! We are lost—we are lost!"

The voice of the mate was heard, even above the hurricane. "Lost! Who says we're lost?" he shouted. "We shall not be lost if you'll work like men. All hands to the pumps!"

The dismayed vessel flew on as rapidly as before through the foaming, tossing seas. The crew laboured at the pumps, the mate swearing furiously at them, when, as at times, they stopped to rest. Then again they pumped away till one of them cried out, in a tone of obstinate despair:

"The leak is gaining on us; we can pump no more."

Again the mate swore, and threatened them with death if they did not persist.

Suddenly, while the mate and the crew together were shouting and swearing at each other, there came a fearful crash; the ship trembled in every timber; another and another crash followed; the roaring sea washed over the vessel; now she lifted, and then down she came with yet more fearful force than before, and every plank and timber seemed rent asunder.



CHAPTER X.

I CLING TO A PART OF THE WRECK, AND AM TOSSED IN THE SEA
—PETER AND READY ARE ALSO SAVED—I IMPROVISE A RAFT,
AND GET PETER AND READY ABOARD—WE REACH AN UNINHABITED ISLAND—SAM SNAG AND ANOTHER ALSO REACH LAND
—FRIENDS OR FOES?—WATER! WATER!—WE LAND A CASK
AND FIND IT CLARET—READY DISCOVERS A SPRING—THE MATE
WANTS MEAT, AND MEANS TO EAT US.

My impulse—and I followed it—was to cling fast to the ring-bolt to which I was holding on when the ship

struck. I heard a few piercing shrieks, some faint cries followed, and then all was silent. I felt that the vessel was breaking up, and plank after plank was torn away, till I judged that but a small portion of the wreck remained for me to hold to. I urged poor Peter to hold on tight to the last, and scarcely had I uttered the words than the remainder of the vessel was rent asunder, and I found myself floating alone on the plank through which the ring-bolt was run. I shouted to Peter—there was no answer; I called Ready, but, for the first time since his puppyhood, he did not reply. I felt very forlorn as I was tossed up and down in the darkness amid that raging sea, with a sensation of down-heartedness which I had never before experienced. The planks forming the part of the deck to which I clung seemed to hold well together, so that I was under no expectation of immediate destruction, and that fact gave me time to think more of the loss of my two faithful companions.

I was convinced that daylight must soon come, and I hoped then to be able to ascertain how near to land I was. I supposed that the vessel had struck on a coral reef, and that it formed a barrier or outside reef to some island, or islet, such as is common in those seas. I was confirmed in this belief from finding the sea so much calmer than it had been, judging by the comparatively easy movements of my raft. I wished and wished for day, and though the wishing did not bring it, it came at last—a grey, cold dawn at first; but as the sun rose, the wind fell, the black vapours cleared away, the blue sky appeared, and now—the raft floating so calmly that I was able to stand up on it—I saw, rising at no great distance above, a yellow sandy beach, grove of cocoa-nut palms, bandanas, and other trees

of the tropics. On the opposite side, a line of breakers, showing the position of the reef, outside which the sea still tossed and tumbled from the effects of the hurricane. Portions of the wreck, too, were floating about in the smooth water, and as I looked I saw that something was moving on one of them. I waved and shouted to draw attention to myself. A figure rose up and waved in return, and a faint bark reached my ear. Even at that distance my faithful Ready recognised me. I was indeed thankful that Peter and he had been thus far saved, though, as we were still some distance from the shore, we might both be starved before we could reach it. I could have swam to it with perfect ease, but I knew too much of the black fins of those seas to risk myself in the water, especially as I suspected that the monsters must have had their thirst for blood freshened by the meal they must have had off some of my late shipmates.

I longed to be able to communicate with poor Peter, but it seemed impossible that I could reach him. As the sun rose the hurricane completely ceased, and the water inside the reef became so perfectly smooth, that I could not only stand upright but could walk about. As I was doing so I saw, not far off, a boat's oar, and a little beyond it what I took to be a mast, with other spars, and a sail and cordage hanging to it. I was contemplating swimming towards the oar, at all events, when, as I was about to plunge in, the fin of a shark slowly gliding by, warned me of my danger. I looked at the oar with a longing eye, and tried if I could by running on the piece of wreck urge it forward. While thus employed without any effect, I felt the breeze, which had completely fallen, fan my cheek, and as it increased I saw that my body was acting as a sail, and

the raft was approaching the oar, though very slowly. At length I was able to seize it, and giving it a flourish above my head in my satisfaction, I began to paddle towards the broken mast with the spars and sail.

As the breeze increased, my fear was that I should be driven past it on one side, and I had to paddle with all my might to steer for it. I shouted with satisfaction when I got up to it, and had hauled it upon the raft. By forcing out a bull's-eye in the deck I found a stop for the mast, and by carrying shrouds to the ring-bolts and to the splintered ends of the planks, I was able to secure it. I next hoisted my sail, and, infinitely to my satisfaction, found that I could direct my course for the part of the wreck to which Peter and Ready were clinging. They saw me coming. Peter waved his hands, and shouted and cried, and Ready jumped and barked, and nearly tumbled overboard in his agitation. I saw a shark waiting to catch him had he done so, and I entreated Peter to hold him down in case of an accident. They both, as I got up, sprang on to my raft at the same moment. Peter could scarcely speak to express his joy at my preservation, and Ready tried to lick me all over to show his love, though he could scarcely have understood how great was the danger we had run. The breeze which had carried me thus far, began to fail, and I feared that, after all, we should be unable to reach the shore.

We were very hungry, and as we had nothing to eat or drink, we were anxious to reach land as soon as possible. Peter suggested that we should make another paddle with one of the smaller spars I had picked up. To show that it was possible to do so he forced out some nails from the planks, and breaking off a piece of board, secured it to the spar. By this means we were

able to paddle much faster than before, and, after considerable exertion, we reached the sandy beach with hearts thankful for our preservation.

To show his satisfaction, Ready scampered about on the sands, and then coming to lick my hands, lay down at my feet, with his tongue out, panting for water. My heart misgave me when I saw this. Had there been water his instinct would have conducted him to it, I fancied. I was already suffering severely from thirst, and so, I saw, was Peter, but he made no complaints. The cocoa-nuts, many of which strewed the ground, were yet too small to contain any milk, and we broke one after the other without finding one with any milk, although we allayed our thirst by chewing a little of the scarcely-formed fruit. A little refreshed, we set off in search of the much-desired water, but we had not gone many yards before the conviction forced itself on me that there was none to be procured.

Except the narrow belt of palm which I had at first seen, not another green thing was to be seen on the islet, the whole surface being little more than sand and coral rock.

As we stood outside the belt observing the inhospitable aspect of the country, I saw two objects moving along the beach in the distance. They were men, and there could be no doubt that they were part of the crew of the unfortunate *Weathercock*. I was thankful that some of the poor fellows had escaped, and we at once hurried on toward them. We had gone some distance when Peter slackened his speed, and even Ready hung back.

"What is the matter?" I asked of the former.

"Don't you see that it's that ill-doing mate fellow?" he answered. "No good'll come if he's to be with us."

"Possibly the peril he has escaped may have improved his character," I remarked, as I advanced towards the individual named, for I saw that he was no other than Sam Snag, and that the man with him was one of the most ill-favoured of the crew—a fellow with a stolid, hang-dog, evil countenance, who looked capable of committing any atrocity without the slightest compunction. Still, repulsive as were the two men, they were fellow-creatures, and I instinctively held out my hand to congratulate them on escaping from the terrific dangers we had gone through, when so many of our companions had perished.

Without either of them appearing to observe the motion they scowled fiercely at me, Snag greeting me with the remark, "Oh, so you've turned up, have you?"

"Yes, our lives have been spared as yet," I answered quietly, determined not to give any cause of offence. "But, friends, we are suffering greatly from want of water. Can you tell us if any is to be found on the island?"

"Friends! eh—well, that's as the case may be," growled Snag. "As to the water, there may or there may not be some; but as there isn't enough for all, it will be for those who have it and can keep it."

The two ruffians held pieces of a spar in their hands, and assumed so menacing an attitude that I felt that it would be hopeless to obtain the water they had found by force, and equally hopeless to obtain it by persuasion.

"Very well, Mr. Snag, what is your own you have a right to keep," I replied calmly. "But I thought that a common danger escaped, would have made us friends, and I certainly should not have treated you as you seem disposed to treat me." Saying this I

turned aside towards the belt of palm trees. I was very glad that he had no fire-arms in his hand, for from the look he gave me, I felt very sure that he would have shot me at that moment, and would then probably have made Peter work for him as a slave, or have killed him also. I heard the ruffians giving way to shouts of hoarse laughter as I and Peter and Ready retired.

Such were the men who were to be my fellow islanders (I will not call them associates or companions), till we could make our escape from the islet. Their presence would greatly increase my difficulties. It would have been bad enough had I and Peter and Ready been alone. All we could do was to keep away from them, and to try and find something with which to quench our thirst.

After hunting about we found some young cocoanuts, blown down by the hurricane. The softest part of these afforded us sufficient moisture somewhat to allay our burning thirst. Ready shared with us, and without this would I think have gone mad. We then felt very hungry, and hoping to find some shell-fish on the rocks we returned to the beach. We were not disappointed, and were soon able to collect as many as we could require. While thus engaged I saw an object floating some way off in the lagoon. I pointed it out to Peter. He thought with me that it looked like a cask. We were seized with the hope that it might be filled with water, and therefore resolved forthwith to put off on our raft to try and obtain it.

We had some difficulty in launching the raft, but at length getting it afloat we paddled out into the lagoon. I cannot describe the eagerness we felt as we neared what we hoped would prove a treasure incomparable.

Only those who have been suffering from thirst as we then were, or in an open boat in the tropics, or when traversing the sandy deserts, can fully comprehend our sensations. We reached the cask. As I was paddling Peter ran to the fore part of the raft and seized it.

"It's heavy, sir, it's heavy," he shouted. "I hope it's water by the weight."

Putting down my paddle I eagerly ran to help him. It was indeed heavy, but we at length got it safe up on the raft. Though the cask had the appearance of a water-cask, I dared not broach it till we could get it back to the shore, as while engaged in doing it we might have drifted away from the land. Parched as were our mouths and throats, we refrained, therefore, till we reached the beach. We had then to find a piece of wood to serve as a hammer, with which I knocked a nail out of our raft, and having sharpened the point, with this instrument managed to make a hole in the cask. It was full of liquid, but not the pure fluid we wished for—it was wine. I cannot describe my disappointment. For an instant I refrained even from tasting it, till Peter observed,

"Well, sir, sure wine ain't so bad a thing after all, is it?"

My mouth in a moment was at the hole. Instead of the strong wine I expected, it was claret. I quickly quenched my thirst, and bid Peter do the same. Though we valued it far less than water I hoped that after all it might serve to prolong existence if used with moderation, and keep us in health even better than water.

Our next thought was to conceal it from the other men, for of course should they find it, they would take care that we should not benefit by it. I was very anxious, however, about Ready—for though claret

might keep us alive it would certainly not suit his taste.

We were not long in digging a hole in the sand and rolling our cask into it, and we then set to work to collect shell-fish to satisfy our hunger. Fortunately I had in my pocket a small article which I would advise every one travelling as I was to carry—a burning-glass—and with it we easily lighted a fire, so that we had not to eat our shell-fish raw. While we were employed as I have described, Ready disappeared. He had been absent for some time, and I began to fear that he had fallen into the power of Snag and the other man, who I felt sure would kill him if they could catch him. We were too hungry to wait, so we sat down to our mollusc meal.

While engaged in picking a shell-fish out of the ashes I felt Ready's nose poked under my arm. "You want to share our meal, and you shall, old fellow," I said, putting a full juicy mollusc into his mouth, which was, I felt, cool and moist, so that I had no doubt he had discovered some water, and taken care to avoid the villains who would not let us enjoy it. I suspected that they were either searching for food, or had fallen asleep, and that he had sagaciously taken the opportunity of approaching the spring. Supposing the latter idea to be correct, I allowed Peter to set off with Ready to try and find it, while I kept up the fire, which when they awoke was likely to attract the two men towards me and thus draw them away from the spring. Ready at once understood our wishes, and as soon as Peter got up he ran on before him as if to show the way.

I had on a Panama straw hat, which having been secured by a lanyard had been preserved. From its thick texture, it held water completely, and so I gave

it to Peter to bring it back with as much as it could hold. I told him to cry out lustily should he be attacked that I might go to his assistance. I followed him a short distance till I could survey the greater part of the island through the grove of trees, but I could see nothing of the two men. Having made up the fire I took my post behind a tree, that I might watch for the two men. As the rock which formed the island was very unequal, Peter and Ready were soon lost to sight. I waited anxiously for their return. However, as the men did not appear, I hoped that they might, as we had supposed, be fast asleep in some cave, or under the shade of some rock, and that they would not interfere with us for the present. From the spot where I stood I could command a wide extent of the ocean's surface, and I eagerly scanned it in the possibility that a sail might appear in the horizon, when I intended, should she approach the island, to signalise her, and endeavour to escape from it.

My mind was greatly relieved when Ready appeared with that jaunty, active air which a dog assumes when he is well satisfied, and he was followed closely by Peter carrying my hat brimful of water. In an instant I had my head into it almost, and had drunk up a large portion before I asked any questions. Peter had found a stream of pure water bubbling up from a cleft in a rock, not thirty yards from the sea, into which it ran in a clear rivulet, in sufficient quantity to fill any number of ship's casks. The landing on the beach, as far as I could judge from the lad's description, was very good. As he had also observed the staves and hoops of some casks lying about, I had no doubt that it was a spot frequented by vessels in those seas to obtain a supply

of water, when kept out by baffling winds. Had it not therefore been for the presence of the mulatto mate and his associate, we should have had no great cause for anxiety, as we might hope in a short time to be rescued by some vessel visiting the spot. I must confess, however, that I dreaded what might occur before we could get away. A savage villain is the most difficult being in creation to deal with. A lion or a tiger may be seen approaching, and be destroyed, so may a bear, or even a mad dog, a snake may be avoided; but however strongly we may suspect that a fellow man is plotting against our life, we may not defend ourselves until some overt act is committed, or take his life, unless we would have the guilt of homicide or murder on our heads, till he attempts openly to take ours.

Such was the position in which I felt that I was placed with regard to Snag and his companion. All we could do was to be on our guard, for I felt sure that if they fancied it was to their interest to kill us they would do so without the slightest scruple. We had, however, an advantage over them in having Ready on our side, as we might sleep securely, depending on his awakening us on the approach of danger. Then again I felt certain they would try to kill him first if they wished to destroy us.

We had discovered some cocoa-nut shells, the produce of the last year, and though the fruit was dried up they were split in a way which enabled them to hold water. These we filled with the remainder of the contents of my hat, which afforded us a sufficient supply for some hours. We spent the remainder of the day in erecting a hut in which we could shelter ourselves during the night. We passed it, contrary to my expectations, undisturbed. The next day we several times

saw our shipmates on the shore, but they did not come near us, and as before, Peter, accompanied by Ready, accomplished the journey to the spring without being seen by them. He told me that he was sure that from the marks he had before observed on the sand not being increased, that they had not been to the spring since his last visit. This, coupled with their quietness, made me suspect that they also had got hold of a cask of wine, and that as long as that lasted we might hope to escape any annoyance from them.

Several days thus passed, and each day I was more confirmed in my suspicions. At length, one day after we had seen them in the morning on the beach, Peter proposed that he should try and discover what they were about.

"I can creep, creep along, Master Skipwith, for all the world like a snail; do, Mr. Skipwith, do let me go."

With my permission he stole off, and Ready seemed to understand that this time he was not wanted. The sun had nearly reached the horizon, so the men would probably have taken up their quarters for the night. As before, I sat down in a sheltered spot, where, should the men by chance be wandering about, they would not be likely to discover me. I waited for some time till I calculated that Peter ought to have returned. Then the stars came out in the dark sky, bright and clear like drops of liquid fire, but still my young follower did not make his appearance. However, Ready remained perfectly quiet, and I was sure that had he fancied anything was wrong he would have shown signs of uneasiness. At length, despairing of seeing Peter, though I hoped he might have gone round some other way, I returned to our hut. It was empty, and

I began seriously to fear that the lad had fallen into the wretches' hands, and I regretted having let him make the expedition.

I knew so little of the island that I could not venture to go in search of him, and all I could do, therefore, was to sit down and await his coming. I had fallen into an uneasy slumber when I was awoke by the sound of a voice in my ear, which I recognised as that of Peter.

"Oh sir, isn't it just lucky I went, or we'd all have been murdered and eaten by this time to-morrow evening," he said, still trembling with fear. "I heard them from beginning to end, but I'd like to make a long story short. They said one to the other as how they'd had no food, and that starve they wouldn't, and that they'd have the dog to eat, and after him they'd have one of us; that would have been me, but that wouldn't have so much mattered, may be, but they said they'd kill you too—indeed they did—and eat you too—yes—eat you! Oh, I felt my hair stand on end when I heard it, and was near crying out, but I didn't, and waiting till they were talking again to each other loudly, I crept away as I came."

I should have been inclined to doubt the truth of Peter's tale, but it was so circumstantial that I was compelled to believe that his fancy had not deceived him. I cross-questioned him, and found that he had heard the voices of the two men, and had crawled on hands and feet towards them, when he discovered them seated in a cave, which it was evident they had made their present abode. Unfortunately he had not heard them speak of the hour they proposed to attack us. We were thus compelled to be constantly on the watch, and to be prepared for a struggle at any moment. I

can answer for it from experience that it is excessively trying to the nerves to be sitting all night long in the dark, with the expectation of being attacked by a couple of villains with heavy clubs who intend to knock out one's brains. I fully believed that Ready would prove faithful and watchful, but considering that my life and that of Peter were at stake, I could not bring myself to trust altogether to his sagacity. Sleep, of course, I could not, at least so I thought. The hours passed slowly by, the soft sighing of the wind in the trees over head, mingled with the low murmur of the ocean as it beat on the rocks, sounded in my ears, and then there came strange noises, and shrieks, and cries, and unearthly voices in the far distance, away out over the sea, and in spite of all my anxiety and intention of keeping awake till day-light, I was fast asleep. I must have slept soundly, and during more hours than I had supposed it wanted to daylight, when I was effectually aroused by a sharp bark from Ready, and a loud cry from Peter, and starting up I seized my staff and stood ready for action.



CHAPTER XI.

A SKRIMMAGE FOR LIFE—A TRUCE—A SAIL, A SAIL APPEARS—
MARCUS TO THE RESCUE—THE PIRATE TAKES US OFF—SAM
SNAG'S FEARFUL END.

THE grey dawn had just broken. It was the hour when even vigilant watchers are apt to doze, and sleepers to sleep most soundly. I sprang out of our hut, in front of which I found Peter with his staff lifted ready to guard his head, at which the mulatto mate, Sam Snag, who had at that moment come up, was aiming a fierce blow, while his companion, who was a little behind, had also his stick uplifted, prepared to follow up the blow, or to inflict another on the dog, or

on me. It was very evident that they had expected to find us both asleep, and to have murdered us without difficulty. So suddenly, indeed, did I appear, that I was able to turn aside the blow Snag was aiming at the lad, and to give him in return so severe a one on the right arm, that he dropped his stick; and this left me at liberty to defend myself against the other ruffian, who might have given me a great deal of trouble had not Ready, watching the moment that he was about to strike, seized him by the leg, which he tore away at with a fury which enabled me to gain an easy victory. Peter, also, while Snag, unwisely despising his young antagonist, stopped to pick up his stick, dealt him so heavy a blow on his head, that he sent him rolling over, and before he could recover himself I gave him another blow, which very nearly finished him. I had, however, to turn my attention to his companion, who, in spite of Ready's jaws, was about to hit me, and while I warded off the blow Snag picked himself up and retreated, calling upon the other to follow his example. This he could not have done had not Ready at that moment opened his mouth to get a better grip, I fancy, when he sprang away with an agility I had not expected.

Had we followed them they would have had the advantage, for there were plenty of heavy pieces of coral about with which they could have settled Ready. Then, too, they were better prepared, for having only Peter to back me, who, though he had plenty of pluck, was but a boy in strength, I thought it prudent not to push matters to extremities. There we stood, the only four human beings on that desolate island, ready to take each others' lives, and I may say, literally, that our opponents were thirsting for our blood. After all, we were only doing, on a small scale, what nations are

often doing on a large one. Perhaps we had more to fight about, namely, our opponents wanted to eat us, and we did not wish to be eaten. I moralised much in this strain as I waited to see what Snag and his companion would next do. They probably were considering how they could execute their purpose with least risk to themselves. Their eyes glared fiercely as they looked at us. They were evidently very hungry. I determined to try what pacific measures would effect. I shouted to them, and told them that we had found an abundance of shell-fish on our side of the island, and that we would not molest them if they wished to collect it. I told them, also, that they might take some fire from ours. The mate looked at me for some minutes without speaking, as if he did not exactly comprehend what I was saying.

"There isn't much to thank you for that," he at length answered. "However, if you don't wish to do us harm we'll let you alone, and so that's settled."

The reply was ungracious, but I only said, "Very well, it is so understood between us."

I did not, however, intend to trust the villains, for I was sure that, should they discover that we had the wine, they would make an attempt to possess themselves of it, and might, besides, very likely attack us again.

The excitement of the fight had not taken away our appetites, and so Peter and I set to work to collect shell-fish till the sun was high enough to allow of the use of the burning-glass. The two men, seeing how we were employed, followed our example; but even then, the way I saw them talking together and glancing towards us when they thought that they were not observed, convinced me that they would set upon us should they find a favourable opportunity. I had

told Peter to keep near me, but he did not hear me, for, looking up, I saw that he had gone in the direction of the men, who at that moment were springing towards him with their clubs uplifted. I shouted out to him to avoid the danger, and just then, as I glanced seaward, my eyes fell on a vessel standing in under full sail towards the watering-place. I pointed her out to the men, and their attention being thus distracted, the lad escaped and got behind me, while they set off towards the watering-place, to be the first, I concluded, to welcome the strangers, and tell their own tale.

This mattered very little to me. If the strangers were honest, I felt sure that I could make my story good, and if not, I could scarcely be worse off than at present, and might, at all events, get rid of my unpleasant neighbours, waiting patiently till Peter and I could make our escape. Therefore, with some degree of tranquillity, I watched from a rock what was taking place. The schooner stood on like a vessel well accustomed to the place, and when close in brought up and furled all sails. Her crew were of a motley description; and as they approached in their boats, I was convinced of what I had before suspected—that the schooner was the very piratical vessel which had captured the *Shaddock*, and on board which I had found Marcus, the black. Though I could have wished him now, for his own sake, to have been in better company, I was anxious to ascertain if he was still with the pirates, as in that case I had no fear as to our safety. Peter also understood the state of the case.

“Yes, there he is; that’s him standing up in the first boat,” cried the lad. “He seems in an awful rage, though. If I thought he was a-threatening of me, I’d like to run away and hide myself.”

Sure enough, there was Marcus ; but what could have excited his anger ? I soon learned, for, looking higher up the rock, I saw the huge mulatto mate, Sam Snag, and his companion, on their knees with uplifted hands, in the most abject state of terror, imploring mercy, while Marcus, as the boat approached, stood ready with a pistol in his hand to shoot, it appeared, one or the other of them.

As the boat's keel grated on the sand, he sprang on shore, gnashing his teeth like a wild beast, and I thought would have shot Snag dead at that moment, but seeing that he was really totally unarmed, he contented himself with hitting him in the face, and then kicking him over.

"Wretched slave-driver—overseer of your fellow-men—have I found you once again ?" he exclaimed, literally foaming at the mouth, and striking him each time that he spoke. "Death is too good for a wretch like you. No fear, I'll not kill you," and seizing, as he spoke, the huge powerful man by the hair, he dragged him along over the sand. I never saw a man so completely prostrated by abject fear as was this would-be murderer and bully, Snag. Meantime some of the pirates had espied Peter and me, and with no very friendly gestures, thinking that we were of Silas Snag's gang, were hurrying towards us. I thought it was now time to claim the protection of Marcus. The moment he heard my voice his whole manner changed. He almost took me in his arms in the excess of his affectionate feelings, as he inquired by what wonderful circumstance I had come there. I told him of the shipwreck and the cause of it.

"Ah, and that villain unhung was at the bottom of the mischief ! However, we shall settle accounts ere

long. I would have killed him to-day but that death would be too happy a fate for a wretch like him."

I entreated Marcus not to stain his hands with the blood of the man, though I acknowledged that I had little reason for wishing to save him from punishment, as he had just before attempted to take my life and that of my companion.

"Well, I will promise to let him live on as long as he can on this islet," said Marcus, casting a glance of hatred and contempt at the mulatto mate, who stood literally trembling before him. "He knows that it's out of the track of most vessels, and that only those who are engaged as we are come off here occasionally for water, when they cannot venture elsewhere, so that his chance of escape is very small. If he wishes to prolong his life he must kill his companion, or his companion will kill him. Such things have been done on this island before now, and that is one of the reasons why it is so generally avoided."

To this mode of treating Snag I had no objection to make. I could scarcely propose that he should be taken away in the pirate vessel, and he certainly had brought his fate upon himself. I was glad to get away from him and from a spot of such ill-repute; at the same time I doubted whether I should not be leaping out of the frying-pan into the fire. How might I be treated should the pirate be captured by a man-of-war, either English or American, and I be found on board? I could not say that I did not know her character before I went on board, and it was a question whether the plea would hold good that I did so in preference to remaining on a desert island. Still I saw that I had no choice. If I remained with Snag and did not kill him, he would if he had the oppor-

tunity kill me, and Peter and Ready into the bargain; whereas if I embarked I might very possibly get safe on shore, and if we were captured I felt very sure that Marcus would give evidence in my favour, and I hoped that the other pirates would do so likewise.

I told Marcus, therefore, that I accepted his offer, hinting, however, at the predicament in which I should be placed should the schooner be captured.

"She will never be captured," he answered fiercely. "Sooner than that I would blow up the vessel, and all on board."

A pleasant prospect for me, I thought to myself; however, as I said, I had no choice. Accordingly, I and Peter and Ready embarked with Marcus in the first boat returning with water to the schooner. The crew received us without any questions, and we were soon discussing in the cabin such a meal as we had not eaten for many a day. I said nothing about the wine we had left on shore, as I thought that it would do the pirates no good, and might do harm. Great despatch was made in getting water aboard, and in a short time all that was required was obtained. Marcus did not return to the shore, but I heard him giving directions to the officer of one of the boats which went back for water. Meantime I was watching what was taking place on the beach. Snag, who had concealed himself from Marcus, now made his appearance, and was evidently exerting his powers of persuasion on the crew of the remaining boat, probably forgetting that though his words could not reach the schooner his gestures could be seen from her. Judging from his and his companion's manner, he appeared to have been successful; some flasks were produced from the boat, and they and the crew were seen

to sit down, and to smoke and drink in a friendly manner.

The officer sent by Marcus, and several of his men, went heavily armed. On their reaching the beach the crew of the other boat were ordered into her, and then seizing the white man they carried him into their boat. Snag rushed after him but was driven back by the officer, who held a pistol towards his head as he approached the boat. In vain he pleaded with the very men with whom he had so lately been on friendly terms. The horror of his position burst upon him. He was to be left on the desert islet to die alone, without even the companionship of his former shipmate and associate in crime. In vain he pleaded. The pirates laughed at his terror and rage. He stamped—he gnashed with his teeth—he shook his clenched fist. He was unarmed and helpless. The boats pushed off and were already some distance from the beach. He waved and shouted to them. For a minute he stood irresolute, apparently hoping that those he had seemed to gain over would take him on board. Again he waved; some signal was made from the boat. He plunged headlong into the sea, and swam towards her. Still she pulled slowly towards the schooner, though, it seemed, he thought that he could overtake her. Too late he discovered that a barbarous trick had been played him, worthy of the wretches who were guilty of it. He might still have returned to the shore, but just then a dark fin, which had been hovering about the schooner, was seen to dash off in the direction of the boats. An instant after the mulatto mate threw up his arms—a fearful shriek was heard, and he disappeared beneath the water, an ensanguined circle on the surface marking the spot where he had gone down.

Directly after the boats were hoisted in, the breeze sprang up, and the schooner made sail to the northward.

"Now, my friend, at which port do you wish to be landed?" asked Marcus.

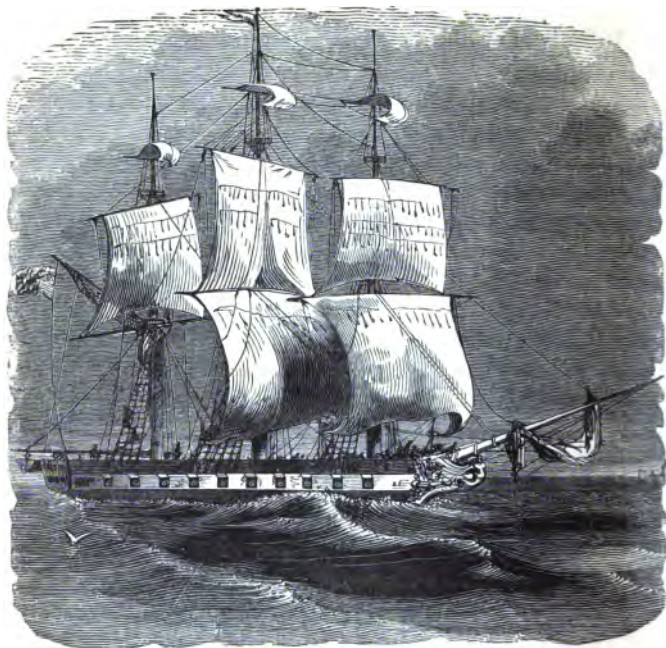
"I was bound to New Orleans, and still wish to return there," I answered.

"It is not the place I would counsel you to go to," he observed. "Some of the people there have long memories, and they would treat you with Lynch law, and a scant allowance of that, if they caught you."

I told him that I was aware that there was some danger, but that I had resolved to push north up the Mississippi; besides which, as I had letters of credit on a mercantile house at New Orleans, I must go there for the sake of replenishing my purse and wardrobe. He replied that he must consult with the captain about it, as he had strong doubts as to the policy of the proceeding. Some hours afterwards Marcus told me that it was impossible to land me at New Orleans, but that they would put me on shore at Havanna, from whence I could easily get across to that city if I still desired to go.

"But can you venture into the Havanna? will not your schooner run a great risk of being recognised?" I asked.

"Oh no, our papers are all correct. We have powerful friends there who would get us out of trouble, if we got into it, and we depend much on our boldness to escape suspicions," he answered. "You shall see. With regard to you we shall only have the truth to tell. We found you cast away on an island, took you off, and wish to land you. We must depend on your discretion for the rest. For anything you know to the contrary, as far as you have seen, this vessel is perfectly honest. You understand me."



CHAPTER XII.

THE PIRATE AND THE MAN-OF-WAR—THE CHASE—A CALM—
FATAL SECURITY—THE PIRATE BLOWN UP—WE ARE CAPTURED
—IN LIEUTENANT TREVOR OF THE SPITFIRE I FIND A DEAR
OLD FRIEND, AND A WAY OF SERVING MARCUS, WHO REGAINS
HIS LIBERTY—WE ARRIVE AT HAVANNA.

Poor Peter was very unhappy when he found that we were to go to an island, instead of to the main-land.

“Oh dear, oh dear, sir, when shall we ever go to a country where we can get along on our feet away from the sight of this ugly sea?” he exclaimed, wringing his hands, and well-nigh blubbering outright.

My chief anxiety was to get away from the schooner as soon as possible, as I feared that the pirates might be tempted to attack some other vessel, and that Peter and I might be brought in as participators in the crime. I had no doubt that our innocence would ultimately be triumphantly established, but that might be only after we had been hung, in which there would not be much satisfaction to ourselves.

A very unattractive recollection of the picture of a row of pirates hanging in chains on the banks of the Thames, which I had seen in my boyhood, would intrude itself on my memory, as I walked the deck in solitude, thinking it wise to speak as little as possible to any one, when the look-out man from aloft hailed to say that a sail was in sight to windward. To my concern, I found that the schooner's course was altered to meet her. We stood on, nearing her fast, when an officer who had gone aloft hailed that she was a large vessel with a wide spread of very white canvas. On this there was a consultation, glasses were directed towards the stranger, the schooner's head once more put before the wind, while all sail that could be packed on her was set, and away we went, with the stranger, which was pronounced to be either a British or American man-of-war, in full chase after us.

I must own that I felt very uncomfortable. My worst fears were about to be realized. This termination to my career was one I had not anticipated when I left home. Kind aunt Becky! how horrified she would be to hear that her favourite nephew had been hung as a pirate by mistake. It would be enough to break the good old creature's heart. From what I had seen and heard of the miscreants with whom I was at present associated, I felt that they would be a good riddance if

captured and hung, with the exception of Marcus, who was, I was sure, fitted for a far different life to that into which circumstances had plunged him. I watched the countenances of the pirates to judge what they thought of the prospect of their escape. They had been so accustomed, it seemed, however, to consider their craft the fastest in those seas that they had no fears about the matter, but laughed and joked as if there was not an enemy who could sink their craft with a broadside close at their heels. The schooner sailed well, but so did the man of war, and as it appeared in the course of time, even better. As her courses rose gradually out of the water, the pirates became less and less loquacious, and finally many of them began to make very long faces. The officers held earnest consultations, they looked anxiously round at the sky, they carefully examined the compass, and then trimmed and re-trimmed the sails. Still the big ship was gaining on us. At length there appeared to be little doubt that we should be overtaken if the wind held as it then was. Marcus was as cool and undaunted as ever, indeed from the unconcerned manner in which he paced the deck, it was difficult to believe that he apprehended the slightest danger. I asked him at last what he thought of the state of things.

"That we shall be taken, and if taken, unless we can effect our escape, or die beforehand, we shall be hung," he answered calmly. "I had heard that a very fast English man-of-war was expected out here expressly to look after us. That must be her."

I did not like to ask more, still I had a strong wish to entreat him not to blow up the vessel, as he had threatened to do, should her capture be inevitable. He seemed to divine my thoughts.

"You know what I would do if we are hard pressed rather than be taken and hung," he said to me. "Should the vessel in chase of us prove to be an American, my fate is sealed if we are taken. Still, I will do nothing to destroy your life if I can help it; but for my companions I cannot be answerable."

"Should she be American my chance of escape will, I suspect, too, be very small, especially if I am accused of having assisted at your escape," said I. "However, we will hope for the best."

I must confess, that though I endeavoured to appear calm and unconcerned, I began to feel most uncomfortable as the stranger drew nearer and nearer, and wished more than once that I had remained on the desert island, even with Snag as a companion. Still, a stern chase is a long chase.

The day was drawing to a close, and, should the night prove dark, we might have a chance of escaping. As the sun sunk towards the horizon the wind fell, and by night there was a perfect calm. The stranger, supposed to be a frigate, lay about eight or nine miles off, also, when last seen, perfectly becalmed. Our escape depended on our getting the breeze first. If the frigate got the wind before us, our capture was inevitable. The pirates, I observed, as sailors often do when expecting to be shipwrecked, went below and put on two suits of their best clothes, and stowed away round their waists and in their pockets as much money as they could carry. I have known instances of men being drowned who might, had they not have been thus overloaded, have been able to swim on shore. Had it not been for this circumstance I should not have supposed that the men had any great apprehension of being captured. Among the officers, however, there were earnest consultations,

and it was even suggested by some that they should take to the boats and desert the vessel; but this proposal was overruled by the majority. The opinion seemed to be that the calm would last for some time, and that, as we were as likely as the frigate to get the breeze first, we had a good chance of escaping. Most of the crew, indeed, were so satisfied with the state of affairs, that they turned into their berths and went to sleep, the usual watch only being left on deck.

Though Marcus had provided a berth for me, it was so hot below that I preferred remaining on deck with Peter and Ready by my side, under a boat's sail, between two guns. After walking the deck till I was weary, admiring the bright constellations overhead, the calm, star-lit ocean, and enjoying the air so cool and refreshing after the heat of the day, I lay down, and was soon fast asleep, as was Peter too, and as Ready appeared to be, but the faithful fellow always slept with one eye open. I had slept for some time, when I heard him give a low warning bark close to my ear. I jumped up and looked about me, though still only half awake. A thick mist so closely surrounded the vessel that I could not see beyond the heel of the bowsprit, and could only just distinguish the calm silvery water alongside, though, at the same time, overhead I could still make out a few stars shining down out of the heavens on this ill-disposed world. Once more Ready gave a low bark, and stretched his neck out through a port over the water, but the watch took no notice. They were either asleep or drowsy and stupid. I felt sure from Ready's behaviour that something was approaching. I listened very attentively. The sound of a boat's keel gliding through the water and that of muffled oars pulled rapidly reached my ears. It was

not for me to warn the pirates of the approach of danger, nor did I wish Ready to warn them, so I patted him on the head and put my hand on his mouth, to show him that I had understood his previous bark, and that I wished him to be quiet.

Meantime I was considering how I should act if the approaching boats, for there were several I was sure, proved to be, as I suspected they were, belonging to the man-of-war. I was not kept long in suspense. On a sudden, the watch on deck, at length hearing the sound of the boats, shouted out, "Keep off! keep off! or we'll fire." The pirates below jumped out of their berths, but before they could get their heads above the coamings several boats dashed alongside. Dark forms were seen climbing over the bulwarks, and a loud voice shouted out, "Yield, whoever you are, to her Britannic Majesty's frigate, *Spitfire*."

Before the words were well out of the mouth of the officer who uttered them, the pirates had rushed to their guns or seized their arms, and, instead of yielding, were desperately attempting to defend themselves and their vessel, the character of which it was very clear the assailants knew before they made the attack. On every side, instead of the silence which had before reigned, pistols were flashing, cutlasses were clashing, men were shouting and cursing, and thrusting boarding-pikes at each other, and big guns and muskets were going off as in the confusion they could be loaded. Though constitutionally fearless, I had no fancy to have my travels stopped by a stray bullet, or by a slash from a cutlass, so when the English seamen climbed up out of one of the boats, calling to Peter and Ready, who followed me, I tumbled into her, when without more ado we stowed ourselves away under

the thwarts, where bullets were not likely to reach us.

So completely had the *Spitfire's* crew taken the pirates by surprise that they gained an easy victory. Some were driven overboard, others below, and many more were cut down even before I had made my escape out of the schooner. I saw Marcus defending himself bravely, and would gladly have gone to his assistance had I had the power. I had not long taken up my quarters in the boat, when I heard a loud shout of, "Back! back! all of you." And men came leaping into the boat—combatants of both sides—tumbling over and almost suffocating me; and there was a loud roar, then a bright glare, and shrieks and groans, and fearful cries, and the boat rocked to and fro, and, I thought, was sinking. Human beings, and burning fragments of wood, and rope, and canvas rained thickly down over us; and when I managed to scramble up and look around me the schooner was not to be seen, and the British crew were throwing the burning wood and the mangled bodies of the dead pirates overboard, and securing the living ones.

"Light a lantern," I heard an officer sing out. "We shall better see what we are about."

Peter and I were very soon afterwards seized on, when Ready set up a true English bark of indignation, and had I not calmed him would have bitten right and left at our captors, and probably have been knocked on the head and thrown overboard for his pains.

"Halloo, who have we here?" exclaimed the officer, holding the lantern to my face. "A renegade Englishman, a perfect villain by his countenance."

"Thank you for the compliment, though concealed under a somewhat dubious turn of expression," I

answered ironically. "I am an Englishman, but one who had no wish to be on board the vessel out of which I have just escaped. I will explain matters when we get on board the frigate."

"Very likely, my fine fellow," observed the officer, an old salt who had seen much service, and had been disappointed in not obtaining his promotion. "And who are you, friend?" he asked next, coming to Peter.

"A true Englishman, like my master; and, sir, I'd just advise you to be treating Mister Skipwith here civilly, for he's an Englishman, and a gentleman born and bred into the bargain," he answered; boldly adding, "And I'll tell you what, sir,—he's not the man to tell a lie to you, nor to any man."

Peter's remarks had considerable effect on the officer, who immediately addressed me in a more civil tone, and desired the men to let me come aft and sit in the stern sheets, where I should be more comfortable. As I was about to move I heard a groan, and just then the light of the lantern fell on the countenance of poor Marcus, who lay near me badly wounded. I entreated that I might be allowed to attend to him, explaining that by his means my life, and that of my attendant, had been preserved. The officer, who was naturally humane, not only permitted this but gave every assistance in his power.

The other boats had been rowing about picking up the survivors of the pirates, and looking for some of the English seamen who were missing. I was glad to hear that the greater number of the latter had escaped in time to the boats, a small warning explosion having taken place before the magazine itself blew up. The order was now given to return to the frigate, the commanding officer's boat leading the way. As he passed

the boat in which I was, he asked the old officer in ours how many prisoners he had got. The reply was "Six; but one of them says he is a gentleman, and the other is his servant, captured by the pirates, and that their lives have been saved by a black man whom we have also on board."

"A likely story indeed," observed the officer in command of the expedition. "However, look to them, Mr. Mudge, and 'treat them as men should men, and not as Rome treats Britain.'"

"That's my old friend, Dick Trevor, to the life," I exclaimed. "I am right, am I not?"

"Yes," he said.

"I thought I must be!" said I. "Oh! Dick, Dick! Is that the way you would treat your friends when you find them out all desolate and alone on the wide ocean?"

"Who can that be?" I heard him exclaim. "'Speak, I charge thee, speak!'"

"Still stage-struck as of yore," I answered. "Is my voice so strangely changed then?"

"Yes! it must be Harry Skipwith, turned up out here in the Gulf of Mexico," he exclaimed. "Come on board my boat, Harry, and tell me all about it as we pull back to our ocean-home on the briny wave. That's not the right quotation, but never mind."

The next instant I was shaking hands with my old school-fellow, the eccentric but gallant second lieutenant of H.M.S. *Spitfire*. I need hardly say that I was most hospitably and kindly received on board the frigate, which was going to put into the Havanna to gain further evidence for the conviction of the pirates; and, what was of no little importance to me, the captain offered to endorse any bill I might wish to draw at that city for the replenishment of my wardrobe.

I enjoyed the luxury of a wash and shave in Trevor's cabin, and a clean shirt, which I had not obtained on board the pirate, and more than all, the pleasant conversation of men of my own rank and education, of which I had been deprived for many a long day. I got the surgeon of the ship to look to Marcus, who rapidly recovered from his wounds, and when I told the captain his history, he declared that it would be a shame to let him be hung as a pirate, which it was plain that he was not of his own free will.

"You must arrange some plan to allow him to escape, only take care that he does not join any fresh band of pirates."

I thanked the captain for his kind feeling towards my brave preserver, and promised that he should not be found on board another pirate vessel.

A week after the scenes I have described we entered the picturesque harbour of Havanna. While the frigate remained there I lived on board her, because I had many friends who pressed me to do so, and because the sleeping accommodations in the hotels in that capital of Cuba are far from satisfactory. At length the time arrived for the frigate to proceed to Jamaica, where the pirates were to be tried. I was thankful to find that all the evidence procured against them related to a period anterior to the time that Marcus had joined them, when I could prove that I had met him in the character of a slave in the United States. I bade farewell to Trevor and my other friends, and took up my quarters at one of the hotels. Though the best in the place it was far from comfortable; for though the provisions and public rooms were tolerable, the bed-rooms were much the contrary. In mine there were five beds; one occupied by a man who walked in his sleep, and who if he had

not committed a murder, by his gestures looked as if he would. In another, the sleeper snored like a rhinoceros; and in the third lay an Irishman, who would talk, awake or asleep, generally to me and at the rest of the party. Nothing could make him keep silent; a boot-jack flung at his head had no effect; he seemed to know what was coming and bobbed under the bed-clothes. The fourth was occupied by a Portuguese dying of consumption, far away from his kindred and friends. Nothing could be done for him.

I have but a word or two to say of Havanna as a city. The streets are numerous, but narrow and dirty; there is a tolerably large palace for the governor, a good opera-house for the people on the evenings of most days in the week, and a very ugly big cathedral for the Sunday mornings, and a *paseo*, or public drive, for the afternoons. On this paseo are seen various antique vehicles, called *volantes*, each carrying two or three dames in full dress. A volante is built like a cabriolet on two wheels, with very long shafts, the points resting in a sort of saddle on a horse's back,—which horse is ridden by a huge negro in vast leather leg coverings reaching, as he sits, almost up to his ears, and no feet to them, though with silver spurs, white breeches, a gold-laced red jacket, and a broad-brimmed straw hat. Everybody knows that cigars are manufactured in Havanna, that the slave trade is winked at, if not encouraged, by the authorities, who find it not altogether unprofitable to their own pockets, and that piracy, for the same reason, is not held in absolute disrepute by the same respectable gentlemen.

I had gone down to see the last of the frigate as she sailed out of the harbour, when, as I was about to return hotel-wards, I saw a black head rise slowly out

of the fore-peak of a Spanish brig lying near, and soon the whole figure of Marcus appeared in view. He saw me, and as the vessels in that harbour are moored stem on to the quays, side by side, he came along over the bowsprit and swung himself down close to me. He congratulated himself on being once more at liberty, though he thought it best not to tell me how he had obtained his freedom. I told him that I was very glad to see him at liberty, and offered to supply him with funds, slender as mine were, to enable him to undertake some honest calling. He replied that he had ample means for his support, a thick roll of gold round his waist, besides a purse full of coin. "Indeed," he added, "I hope that I shall not offend you, sir, when I tell you that I purposed offering you money, to enable you to proceed on your travels till you could reach some place where you may replenish your purse." I thanked Marcus for his generous offer, but I felt doubly obliged to my friend the captain, who had enabled me to supply myself with funds, lest I should have been tempted to accept it; for I could not help reflecting how that money must have been obtained.

"We may, I hope," said Marcus, "meet again, though in what part of the world I know not; but I have one favour to ask,—it is that you will give me your address in England, and that should I ever again reach that country of true freedom, I may be allowed to visit you."

I need scarcely say that I agreed to what Marcus proposed. There was something about him which strangely attracted me, and with regret I bid him farewell, scarcely expecting ever to see him again.

Havanna had no charms for me, and I was therefore glad once more to embark on the fickle ocean in an attempt to reach New Orleans.



CHAPTER XIII.

FROM CUBA TO NEW ORLEANS, AND HENCE UP THE MISSISSIPPI
ON TO ST. LOUIS—OUR VOYAGE UP THE OHIO—KENTUCKY
SHOTS—CINCINNATI—AWAY TO TORONTO—THE HUDSON'S BAY
COMPANY'S TERRITORY DESCRIBED.

AFTER we had lost sight of Cuba I could scarcely help expecting to see some rakish-looking craft bearing down on us, and I must own that it was with inward satisfaction that I remembered the fact that the black schooner and most of the scoundrels on board her were blown up, and unable any more to trouble voyagers over the deep sea. Poor Peter was continually on the look-out for an enemy, and if he saw a sail in the horizon he would come up to me and ask if we hadn't better get ready to fight, lest it should be "another on them cut-throat gentlemen a-coming to look for us."

Notwithstanding all the lad's prognostications of evil, we reached, without any misadventure, the Crescent City, as New Orleans is not inappropriately called, on account of the shape it presents, built along the curving shore of the river. I hastened at once on landing, followed by Peter and Ready, to the office of the merchant on whom I had letters of credit, fortunately forwarded originally in duplicate by post, and having obtained a supply of cash, and such necessaries as I required, I was in a few hours on my way up the Mississippi, earnestly hoping that on this voyage I should escape being snagged, and not be blown up, as Aunt Becky had predicted would be my fate.

I have not been complimentary to New Orleans, but I must say that it is a very grand city. It is divided into two parts by Canal Street—the Old and the New—the Old, built by original French and Spanish founders, contains narrow and dirty streets and the worst class of the population, while in the New are numerous fine buildings, broad streets, and wealthy and respectable inhabitants. It is not nearly so unhealthy as is supposed when once a person is acclimatised,—but to be sure a good many die in the process. And so I make my bow to New Orleans, as the natives call it. Although I had not many fears on the subject, I was glad to get away without being recognised, nor did anyone on board the steamer take especial notice of me, that I could discover. It was curious to go paddling on day after day, and night after night, and still to find oneself floating on the same broad stream, sometimes with rich level land on either side, and at others with light bluffs, or towns, or villages; also to pass the mouths of large rivers, and to be told that one was navigable eight hundred or a thousand miles

up, and that five or six tributaries, each also navigable for six hundred miles or so, while others fell into it. Truly the eastern, southern, and northern parts of North America present a wonderful river system, suited for internal navigation.

We had a curious collection of passengers on board—five hundred at least in the main cabin—some of them, I judged by their physiognomies, not the most respectable portion of the human race. A party of them got round me, and in the most insinuating manner invited me to join them in a friendly game of cards, or dice, or dominoes, indeed they were not particular, anything that would enable me to pass the time agreeably. In spite of all their arguments I persevered in declining their polite invitations, and at length, in reply to no very polite remarks on my manners and appearance, and a strong expression of doubt as to whether I had anything to lose—

“You’ve hit it, gentlemen,” I remarked, quietly looking up at them. “It’s dull work to skin a flint, and I did not wish to give you the trouble.”

“You did well to keep clear of those fellows,” observed a gentleman to me shortly afterwards. “If they could catch you on a dark night near the side of the vessel, they wouldn’t scruple to rob you and heave you overboard.”

In many places the banks of the Mississippi exhibit high bluffs of an earthy nature, sometimes broken into the most fantastic forms, representing castles, towers, church steeples, and ruins of every description.

On the morning of the sixth day we were off the mouth of the Ohio, which river can be ascended for nine hundred miles to Pittsburg, and it must be remembered that I had already come upwards of a thousand

miles from New Orleans. The next day, after paddling against stream two hundred miles farther, I landed at St. Louis, in the State of Missouri. It is a handsome city, built on ground sloping up from the Mississippi, about twenty miles distant from the mouths of the two mighty streams of the Missouri and Illinois, while the Mississippi itself has there already pursued a course of nearly seventeen hundred miles. It is a very busy place, and vessels of every description crowd its quays. Proceeding up the Ohio, I landed at Louisville, the chief town in Kentucky. Everyone has heard what Kentucky riflemen can do with their weapons. Understanding that a match was going forward outside the town I went to see it. To my disappointment it was over, but I saw two men shooting away as fast as they could load, at two cocks in a sort of enclosure, with an open space towards us, through which they kept constantly coming into view. Nearly a dozen shots had been fired, and the birds ran about as lively as at first.

"Well, sir, I think with uncle's old fowling-piece I could knock over them barn-doors a precious sight faster than that," observed Peter, eyeing the marksmen with a glance of contempt.

"Now I guess, stranger, if you was to look closer you wouldn't be quite so ready to boast of what you could do," observed a stout, good-natured looking man near us. "Understand, just what you say you could do, they don't want to do. Their business is to knock the feathers out of them birds' tails, and do them no mortal injury. There's a chalked line on their tails, inside of which a shot mustn't go, or the man who fires it loses the match. Each man, too, has his bird, and it requires a sharp eye to know which is which."

Such I found to be the case. One man had shot all

but one short feather away, and he was afraid of killing his bird; the other had shot all but two very long thin ones away, and his bullets constantly flew between them.

The next day we stopped at Cincinnati, a very handsome, civilized-looking city, and one of the most important west of the Alleghanies. Here we embarked on board a much smaller steamer than any which had before carried us, though we had still four hundred miles farther to go up the stream to Pittsburg, from whence it was my intention to proceed to Toronto, and so find my way into the Hudson's Bay Territory, in the best way I could. The boat drew very little water, for we had rapids and shallows to pass over; not so little, however, as a builder on board boasted was the case with one he had constructed—"Six inches, sir! why you know well enough, I guess, that if you was to attempt to send a craft drawing six inches of water up some of our streams, she'd be grounding every day in the week, and ten times in the day," I heard him exclaim, in a tone of contempt, to a fellow passenger. "Talk of inches, sir—what do you say to one I built, sir—why, she'd go along right slick across the prairie, provided the dew was thick enough on the grass in the morning. Why, sir, nothing could stop that craft if she could but get a taste of water." Whether or not his assertion was believed I do not know, but as he was a big strapping fellow, and carried a formidable-looking bowie-knife in his waistcoat pocket, with which he used to pick his teeth and carve his meat, or indeed, what was not so pleasant, any dish intended for the public before him, nobody chose to call his assertion in question.

The country in which I was now about to seek for adventures, is a region which must before long become of importance on account of the great highway between

the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans passing over it. Through that region indeed will be found the true and only practicable North-west passage, but it will be across the rolling prairie instead of the rolling ocean, and over rocky mountains instead of mountainous billows. The land I speak of is Central British America, also known as "Rupert's Land," "the North-west Territory," and the "Hudson's Bay Company's Territory."

The earlier French settlers in Canada believed, and not without reason, that the high road to China would be found along the course of the mighty river on the banks of which they had located themselves. Their idea was ridiculed, and the name of La Chine was given to a village to the west of Montreal by those who believed that the explorers would never get farther in that direction, little supposing that ere long a rich province, full of wealthy cities, would have its eastern limits beyond the point in question; while only of late years the truth has dawned on a few far-sighted individuals that in that direction will be found the shortest and safest high road not only to China, but to provinces fast rising into importance, to British Columbia and Vancouver's Island, to the wide-spreading shores of the Pacific, and to the numberless islands which stud its bosom; that it will afford a western outlet to the commercial enterprise of the British North American Confederation, which will raise it to a position of great wealth and power.

Let me try and map-down this great country. Following up the course of the St. Lawrence across Lake Ontario, and passing over a broad isthmus, where a deep canal is to be formed, we reach lake Huron. Still going west some two thousand miles distant from the

mouth of the St. Lawrence, we arrive at the Saulte St. Marie, where the waters of the great Lake Superior fall into that of Huron. Here is a free port, and a free settlement has been formed; but we have yet Lake Superior to cross, when we shall reach Fort William, in Thunder Bay, where the most western British American settlement has lately been established. From Thunder Bay, a spot of great picturesque beauty, a good map will show us a succession of lakes, joined by rivers, and known as Dog Lake, Lac des Milles Lacs, Rainy Lake, and Lake of the Woods, the chain, extending till the extensive Lake Winnipeg is reached, having again numberless other lakes and rivers farther west. A journey of about eighty miles beyond the extreme west of the lovely Lake of the Woods carries us to a settlement of British people; not of people who have cast off their allegiance to the British crown, but true subjects, who desire to live under British laws and institutions, and to enjoy all the privileges which Britons justly value as their birthright; yet it is not too much to say that no community of the British race is more completely debarred from the advantages possessed by Englishmen at large than are the inhabitants of the settlement in question.

A glance at our map will show us a river rising in the State of Minnesota, and running nearly due north, entering the British territory at the forty-ninth parallel of latitude, and finally falling into Lake Winnipeg. This is the Red River, and the British settlements on its banks are known as the Selkirk, or Red River settlements. Here are located about six thousand white inhabitants. The spiritual wants of the people have not been neglected, and a bishop, called the Bishop of Rupert's Land, and about eight Protestant clergymen

are placed there, besides a Roman Catholic bishop and several priests. The productions of the district are valuable and numerous, and the climate, though cold enough in winter to ensure a supply of snow, and very warm in summer, is healthy in the extreme, and admirably adapted to British constitutions. The Red River is navigable from the States to the settlements, and again thence to Lake Winnipeg, from which there is a ramification of water communication by lakes and rivers, navigable for steamers for many hundred miles.

The Hudson's Bay Company have a strongly-fortified post at the junction of the Assiniboine and Red Rivers, called Fort Garry, which serves as the citadel or capital of the settlements, for town or village there is not. The general aspect of the country here is that of a rich level prairie, with the river cutting its way tortuously through it towards Lake Winnipeg, forming steep or cliff-like banks. Belts of trees, however, are to be seen near the river, and woods scattered about, and to the east ranges of hills, while along the sides of both rivers are homesteads, substantial farm-houses, mills, stores, churches, parsonages, and school buildings. These settlements are about four hundred miles west of Thunder Bay, in Lake Superior, and the country for this distance must be the first opened up, and about three hundred miles of it is by far the most difficult part of the undertaking; yet the engineering difficulties for forming such a road as is required are trifling compared to those which have been overcome in numerous works in Canada.

It is a country peculiarly of lakes, and rivers, and forests, the timber being very fine. The timber, by means of the lakes and rivers, can be carried to the settlements, while it is most valuable for the formation of the roads, dams, canals, and villages about to be con-

structed. I am speaking of the first three hundred miles of road to be formed, whether that road is by lake, river, canal, or on the firm earth. The great object is to get a way opened up with the greatest expedition and at the least expense. Now let us turn our eyes west of the settlements, and we shall see a belt of fertile land, in some places one hundred, in others fifty miles wide, extending for eight hundred miles, to the very base of the Rocky Mountains. This magnificent belt of land has already been traversed from one end to the other by exploring expeditions, and emigrant parties with carts, dragged by oxen travelling at the rate of twenty miles a day. It is intersected by many rivers. The carts were unladen, formed into rafts, and towed across; the cattle swam or waded. The once declared impassable Rocky Mountains were passed with perfect ease, in several places, and British Columbia entered.

To understand clearly the nature of the country, let us suppose ourselves standing on the banks of the Red River, looking west. In front we have the fertile belt stretching out before us, consisting chiefly of rich level prairie land, ascending gradually towards the Rocky Mountains. Rivers and streams run directly across it at intervals, invariably lined with trees, and here and there are forests of considerable extent, though generally trees are found in small clumps or copses, covering a few acres, having escaped the ravages of the fires which destroyed the primeval forests.

On the left, running from west to east, there is the Assiniboine River, connected by the Calling River with the south branch of the Saskatchewan. On the right, extending in a north-easterly direction, is a range of wood-covered mountains known as the Riding, Duck, and Porcupine Mountains, and on the

other side of these are three large lakes, the Winnipeg, Manitobah, and Winnepegosis. Into the northern end of the first falls the important river Saskatchewan, navigable by steamers for two or more hundred miles, and, with certain breaks, up to the very foot of the Rocky Mountains. The Saskatchewan gives its name to the greater portion of the fertile territory, which is known as the valley of the Saskatchewan. This wonderful chain of rivers and lakes abounds in a great variety of excellent fish, on which once numerous tribes of natives entirely subsisted—so that they thus afford a never-failing supply of food, abundant irrigation, and extensive water inter-communication.

Compared with the latitude of the British North American Provinces, the climate may be supposed to be severe, but it should be understood that as the west is approached the climate improves, and the fact is that near the Rocky Mountains, farther north, and at a far greater elevation, the climate is not more severe than at the Red River. Thus there is uniformity of temperature and natural productions throughout the territory. The cold is great, but not greater than in Lower Canada, and sometimes the winters are so mild that, as Mr. Ross, an old settler, states, he has known ploughs at work at Christmas. When spring begins, the heat becomes considerable; thus all the productions of the earth ripen with wonderful rapidity, and from sowing to harvest time is often but three months.

Professor Hind, of the University of Toronto, stated some years ago that the valley of the Saskatchewan, or rather the basin of Lake Winnipeg, contains an area available for cultivation of eighty thousand square miles—a territory very nearly as large as England—and that it is capable of supporting an agricultural popula-

tion exceeding fifteen millions of souls. "The outlying patches of fertile land lying within the limits of the great plains, together with the deep, narrow valleys of the rivers which run through those arid regions (that is, to the south of the fertile belt), the east flanks of the Rocky Mountains, and the low lands in the region of the great lakes, might support another ten millions, so that the present available area of arable soil—the greater portion of which is susceptible of being at once turned up by the plough—would sustain an agricultural population equal to that of Prussia." Indeed, vast as is Canada, the professor's calculations show an excess of land fitted for the permanent abode of man, in favour of the basin of Lake Winnipeg over Prussia, before its recent accessions of territory, of five million five hundred thousand acres. If the whole quantity of land fit for cultivation in Canada were occupied, it would sustain a population of eighteen millions, while in the same proportion the territory under discussion would sustain nineteen millions of people. Including the Red-men, who slaughter the buffaloes which roam over its rich pastures for the sake of their skins alone, it scarcely now supports twenty thousand souls.

As to the natural productions of this region, it may briefly be stated to contain abundance of wood, stone, and clay for building; lignite in many districts, and coal in others; iron of excellent quality, in the neighbourhood of coal; salt, which has long been in use, the springs being easy of access; and grasses, which afford rich fodder in abundance throughout the winter season to large numbers of horses, and to many cattle. "Within the limits of the fertile belt vast herds of buffalo come in winter to feed and fatten on the rich natural grasses, which the early frosts in autumn convert into nutritious

hay." To sum up the capabilities of the territory : It is an admirable grazing country, and cattle and horses can remain out all the winter. Sheep thrive and multiply. Pigs, where there are oak woods, if turned out, require no looking after.

It must be understood that agricultural operations have for many years been carried on at the Red River, and round the mission-stations and trading-posts, and that the statements made are the results of actual experience. Wheat is the staple produce. The ordinary yield is thirty bushels to the acre, and oftentimes forty bushels. It is cut three months from the date of sowing. Indian corn is very fine, and never fails on dry lands. Root crops, especially potatoes, turnips, and beet, yield abundantly, and attain large dimensions. The potato disease is unknown. Garden vegetables grow luxuriantly, and equal those of Canada. Barley and oats, when cultivated with care, yield as abundantly as wheat. Of hay from the natural grasses an abundance can be made. Tobacco is successfully cultivated. Hops, in great luxuriance, grow wild. Ale is brewed with them at Red River. Hemp and flax have also been successfully cultivated. A variety of fruits grow wild, such as strawberries, raspberries, currants, and gooseberries; so does rice. Melons grown in the open air are very fine, and sugar, as in Canada, is abundantly obtained from the maple-tree.

Again, considering the abundant supply of fish, and the various sorts of game, large and small, from the buffalo and deer to the hare and rabbit, it will be understood how amply the territory is provided by nature for the support of a large population.

Of the Indians, there are scarcely forty thousand in

the fertile belt and wood and lake regions together, who chiefly subsist on buffalo flesh and fish, and live in skin or birch-bark tents. The Prairie Indians have large numbers of horses, while only some tribes of the Wood Indians possess those animals. Some few have been converted to Christianity, but the larger proportion retain all their heathen customs, though generally they do not show any hostility to the whites. The Sioux Indians, however, across the boundary line, from the treatment they have received from the people of the United States, are determined enemies of the white men and half-breeds.

But how, it may be asked, can this vast territory be peopled? By a simple and easily carried out system. The object, in the first place, is to establish a direct communication across it. A railroad is out of the question for many years to come, and even a regular macadamized road can scarcely be expected for some time, but we may well be content if we can obtain a road over which a wheeled vehicle may travel some forty miles in the day, and horsemen at still greater speed. In the first instance, there must be settlements, and it is proposed to establish them at about twenty-five miles apart, in a direct line from Lake Superior to the Rocky Mountains. Grants of land with freedom from taxation, and the certainty of obtaining ample employment, will quickly attract settlers. In the first place, in each settlement a wheelwright and cart-builder, a blacksmith, two or more carpenters, a painter and glazier, a baker, a butcher, an innkeeper, and other artisans obviously required on a great highway, would find employment. Several farmers and agricultural labourers, and a market-gardener, would be wanted to supply food. Stable-keepers, and grooms, and postilions may be named,

and all these would, of course, attract storekeepers, tailors, and shoemakers. A police force, with small bodies of military pensioners, and perhaps a few troops, might be stationed at intervals in the settlements along the line. To these communities, with the aid of some navvies, might be confided the duty of improving the road at first roughly marked out. Bridges might be required over small streams, and ferries would certainly be required over broad ones, and here boat-builders and ferrymen would be called for.

It will thus be seen in what way the settlements can first be formed; but before they are placed along the whole line, the more difficult part of the country between Lake Superior and the Lake of the Woods must be pierced through. Trees have to be cut down, rough places smoothed, and bridges erected; and where the line is by water, dams have to be constructed, landing-places formed, and steamers launched. Scarcely one summer, however, would be required for the work; and it must be remembered that the route in question has been traversed for years back, and that, although heavy luggage cannot at present be carried that way, passengers and light goods may be transported by canoes through the lakes and rivers which have been described. The first settlement has already been formed by the colonial government at Fort William, on Thunder Bay. About forty miles to the west is the boundary line between the British North American Confederation, which is destined ere long to include the whole of British North America, and the Hudson's Bay Company's territory.



CHAPTER XIV.

FROM TORONTO TO THE PACIFIC—JACK TREVOR, AN OLD CHUM,
FOR FELLOW-TRAVELLER—FROM COLLINGWOOD BY STEAMER—
BIRCH-BARK CANOES—LAKE SUPERIOR AND THUNDER BAY—
FORT WILLIAM TO LAKE WINNIPEG—THE KAMINISTIGUIA—SWIFT-
FOOT, OUR INDIAN GUIDE, AND HALF-CASTE CREW—A PORTAGE
—OUR CAMP AND PROGRESS—MISSIONARIES AND SETTLERS—
FORT GARRY AND SELKIRK SETTLEMENTS.

THERE is nothing that I need relate excepting that after my arrival at Toronto I immediately set to work in right earnest about preparations for a journey of fifteen hundred miles or so across the continent to the Pacific.

I had become intensely British during my stay in the States, and resolved that my journey should be, if possible, entirely through British territory, and remote as possible from the United States boundary. Some of my friends advised me to go by railway to La Cross, and from thence up the upper waters of the Mississippi to St. Paul, in Minnesota, then, by a stage to Georgetown, on the Red River, down which stream I could proceed by a steamer to the Selkirk Settlement, in the centre of which Fort Garry is situated, at the point where the Assiniboine and Red River meet.

When travelling I seldom fail to find a companion, and my disposition being somewhat of a malleable nature, I generally manage so to work his and mine together that we are able to rub on socially till called upon to separate. In the present instance I was more fortunate than usual, for, while I was in the midst of my preparations, who should turn up one day—or rather roll into the office of my cousin, John Brown—but my old schoolfellow, and strong-fisted, stout-hearted friend, Jack Trevor, brother of Lieutenant Trevor of the *Spitfire*! He was a capital shot, could handle oar and scull right well, throw a fly skilfully, run like a deer, walk thirty miles on a stretch without fatigue, and woe betide the man who felt the strength of his arm! I told Jack what I was about to undertake.

"Just suit me," he exclaimed. "I was wondering what I should do. I've a year or so to spare, some cash to throw away, am in good training, and should amazingly like to have a scamper after buffalo."

The ice of winter having sufficiently disappeared from the upper lakes to render navigation possible we started by the northern railway, passing Lake Simcoe to Collingwood, on the shores of the Georgian Bay, and

then embarked on board a steamer named after the same heroic admiral. Paddling away north, we were soon out of sight of the generally low shore, and then the wind began to blow and the waves to roll furiously, making the big vessel tumble about in a most uncomfortable manner, till I thought it more than possible that she would go down then and there to the bottom of the lake. Peter looked at me reproachfully, remarking—

“I thought when we got into this country we were to have no more tossing about on the salt ocean?”

“Nor have we. This is but a pool, Peter; the water is fresh, and the land is on every side of us, only we don't see it,” I answered, but I doubt if he was satisfied.

We managed, however, to tumble on till we got under the lee of a wooded island, where we remained as quietly as in a mill-pond till the next morning, when we continued our voyage between the Manitoulin islands and the north shore of Lake Huron till we came to the Bruce mines.

Along this north shore a road has been surveyed and settlements laid out. Proceeding up the St. Mary River, we reached the villages of that name—one on the British, the other on the States' side. Between the two Lake Superior sends its waters in a fierce rapid into the river on their course to the ocean. We avoided them by stealing through a canal on the American side. On our way we took on board two birch-bark canoes which my indefatigable cousin, John Brown, had caused to be provided, as, also, a supply of gum to stick over the seams, wattap, which is the root of the tamarack, used to sew the pieces of birch-bark together, cod-lines, and other indispensables for canoe navigation. Here, also,

an Indian guide and a crew joined us—dark-skinned individuals descended from French Canadians and Indians, a class which is employed by the Hudson's Bay Company—in their canoes. I will describe them as we go on. We purposed picking up, afterwards, a few Indians to increase our strength.

Away we steamed along the northern shore of Lake Superior, occasionally sighting some lofty bluff, said to contain a vast supply of iron, copper, and other mineral wealth, till we neared the fine headland of Thunder Cape and found ourselves amid the magnificent scenery of Thunder Bay. Here the steamer anchored; and we, launching our canoes, went on shore at Fort William, an important port standing at the mouth of the river Kaministiquia. We found that surveyors had already laid out a settlement on the banks of this stream, which is navigable for large vessels for a good many miles from its mouth.

While preparing for our long inland voyage of something not much under five hundred miles to the Red River, we were entertained by the surveyor, who showed us the plans proposed for opening up the country for general traffic. Trevor had become very eager on the subject, and declared that he should be ready to devote his life to the undertaking. We therefore agreed to follow the same route. Sending our canoes with the *voyageurs* up the Kaministiquia River, we were to proceed north along the shore of Thunder Bay till we reached a harbour abreast of Dog Lake, where we were to land and push our way for twenty-eight miles across the country, along the line where a good road was soon to be formed to Dog Lake. Here we were to embark in our canoes, as we should have a clear navigation of thirty-five miles across the lake and

up Dog River till it became shoal; then, landing, we were to ascend to the height of land forming the boundary between Canada and the North West Territory, and make a portage of five miles to the Savanna River. A portage is literally a carrying. The canoes and cargo are carried on men's shoulders over the land, either to avoid a rapid, or from one lake or stream to another; thus, these intervening spaces of land come to be called also portages. After launching our canoes in the Savanna River we were to obtain a free navigation of sixty-five miles, the Lake des Mille Lacs, and the river Seine to the Little Falls. We were, from this place, to be prepared for numerous portages, amounting altogether to seven miles, and fifty-nine and a half of navigation. After the last of these portages we were to get a run of two hundred and eight miles down the river Seine into Rainy Lake, and from thence into the Lake of the Woods, which we were to cross at its western extremity either to a small lake known as Lac Plat, ninety-one and a half miles across an easy country to Fort Garry, or to descend the Winnipeg River into Lake Winnipeg, and along its northern shore to the mouth of the Red River.

We decided on the latter route for ourselves, as we wished for our canoes to navigate the lakes and rivers to the westward, and, not being expected, we should have had no horses sent over by the Selkirk people to meet us. It must be remembered that the Selkirk settlement and the Red River settlement are different names for the same district, and that Fort Garry is in the midst of it. Trevor, who had an especial taste for engineering projects, was delighted with the account, and made out that by means of good steamers, short railroads, or even roads for coaches, and tramways over which

loaded boats could be drawn, the distance between Fort William and Fort Garry might be accomplished in six days.

"You see," he observed, "the greater portion of the distance would be performed by steamers; though, on the sixty miles of broken navigation on the river Seine, large boats to be dragged up inclined planes and along tramways over the portages would be more suitable. Then the Red River people would make the short road necessary between this place and Lac Plat, and supply the conveyances, greatly to their profit. Why, the whole route, if people had energy, might be open by next summer, and as we all know that the distance between the Red River and the top of the Rocky Mountains offers no impediments, if the inhabitants of British Columbia would open up a communication on this side, we should, in a year or two, be sending our letters across the continent from the Atlantic to the Pacific in a couple of weeks or so; and fellows like you or me, Harry, would be able to accomplish it by railway, steam-boat, and on horseback, in about the same time."

Having sent the canoes on two days before, we supplied ourselves with packs, blankets, and provisions for a couple of days, and engaged an Indian guide, and landing at the mouth of Current River, on the northern shore of Thunder Bay, we worked our way along the line of the proposed road to Dog Lake. We just saved our daylight to the shore of the lake, where we prepared to camp. Our guide first cut off a quantity of the young shoots of the spruce fir, which he strewed on a dry spot to form our beds, while, at his suggestion, we collected a large supply of dry wood for a fire. Our kettle for tea was soon boiling, and by the aid of our frying-pan, the most useful of all cooking utensils,

the dried provisions we had brought with us were converted into a savoury stew, seasoned with garlic, salt, and pepper, and thoroughly enjoyed by us. Trevor pronounced it jolly fun, and declared that he should never grow tired of living as we then were doing. Never go across wild countries without a portable frying-pan. You can boil water in it, cook, boil, stew, fry, and even bake, without any other appliance than a frying-pan and a little fire and water. Our Indian



Swiftfoot.

guide, whose name was Swiftfoot, was so pleased with the way we treated him that he begged he might accompany us, and as he bore a good character for honesty and good temper and for being an expert and daring hunter and canoe paddler, we accepted his services. As he understood English fairly, and had

already been a considerable distance up the Saskatchewan, we considered him a valuable acquisition to our party.

The next morning the canoes appeared. Having camped at no great distance from where we were, and having taken a hurried breakfast, we embarked.

"Take care," cried Swiftfoot, as we stepped on board; and not without reason, for though accustomed to University eight-oars, we as nearly as possible pitched head foremost out on the other side of our frail barks, to the great risk of capsizing them and spoiling our goods.

Trevor and Swiftfoot went in one canoe, I with Peter and Ready in the other; and the crews, with stores and provisions, were evenly divided between us. Away we paddled across the lake, our Indians striking up a song of the character of "Row, brothers! row!" but not so melodious. All day we paddled, and camped at night. When we came to a portage we jumped out. Two men carried each canoe; the rest loaded themselves with her cargo and bore it on their shoulders half a mile, or perhaps two or three, or more, till smooth water was again reached.

On those occasions we sighed for tramways over which we could run swiftly with cargo and canoes. Every portage has its name, and so, indeed, has every point, stream, and isle. For ages the fur traders' canoes have been traversing this country, and to these people every mile is known. We indulged in small tents for sleeping; but our beds were the hard rocks sprinkled with spruce-fir tops and covered with rugs.

I have not described our canoes. They were formed of the bark of the white birch-tree, peeled off in large sheets and bent over a slender frame of cedar

ribs confined by gunwales, which are kept apart by slender bars of the same wood. A thread called wattap, made out of the flexible roots of the young larch-tree, is used to sew the sheets of bark together and to secure them to the gunwales, which have thus the appearance of an Indian basket. The joinings are made water-tight by a coating of tamarack gum put on hot, or by the pitch of the yellow pine. The seats are suspended from the gunwales so as not to press against the sides. The stem and stern are alike, the sheets of bark being cut into a graceful curve, and are frequently ornamented with beads or coloured moose hair. Ours carried six men each, and our baggage and provisions, and were so light that a couple of men lifted them out of the water and ran along with them over the roughest ground with the greatest ease. They are urged on by light paddles with broad blades, and are steered by another of the same shape. For several days we paddled on—making no great speed, however, for across lakes in calm weather we seldom did more than four miles an hour—when Trevor used to sing out, “Oh, for an eight-oar; oh, for an eight-oar! how we would make her spin along.” However, I persuaded him that we were better as we were—because, in case of being snagged, not having a boat-builder at hand, we should have been puzzled to repair her.

For several days we paddled on without meeting with any actual adventure, although objects of interest were not wanting during every hour of the day. We passed through the Lake of the Thousand Lakes and camped on its shores before beginning our descent of the river Seine. The night passed calmly. I awoke early: the stars were slightly paling, a cold yellow light had begun to show itself in the east, on

the lake rested a screen of dense fog, through which a host of Indians bent on our destruction might have been approaching without my being able to discover them; landward was a forest equally impenetrable. Walking a step or two from the camp I heard a sudden rush. I started, and cocked my smooth-bore, but nothing appeared, and I guessed that it was a fox, minx, or marten, prowling close by, attracted by the remains of last night's supper. From the expiring camp-fires a thin volume of smoke rose up above the trees and then spread lakewards, to join the damp misty veil which hid the quiet waters from view. Round the fires were the silent forms of the Indians lying motionless on their backs, wrapped in their blankets, like shrouded corpses stretched at full length. Two or three were under the canoes, and Swiftfoot had taken post in front of Trevor's tent. As dawn advanced an Indian awoke, uncovered his face, and sitting upon his haunches, looked round from beneath the folds of his blanket, which he had drawn over his head. After a few minutes a low "waugh" from his throat made some of the others unroll themselves and begin blowing at the fire and adding fresh fuel. A few minutes were spent by the French *voyageurs* in prayer, and then the rest of the party being roused, the tents were struck, and our early meal, consisting of fried dampers and fish, biscuits, with hot coffee and tea, sweetened, but without milk, enjoyed. The canoes were then launched.

"No frying-pans, hatchets, or other valuables left behind?" sang out Trevor, who acted as commander-in-chief.

Each man examined the property committed to his charge, and all being found right, we paddled down the stream as usual.

Here let me advise those engaged in similar expeditions to be careful about such trifles, for a party may be brought to a standstill, and lives endangered, by the loss of articles which may appear, at the moment, of little value.

Now and then we came to rapids which it was deemed tolerably safe to shoot. We had performed this feat twice when we came to another. We had got through the greater part when, as we were dashing on amid the foam, the stern swiftly turning round, we grazed a rock.

"A narrow shave!" I exclaimed, thinking we were safe, but Peter's cry of—

"Oh, sir! oh, sir! the water is a running in, and we shall all be drowned!"

"Stick your thumb into it," cried Trevor, from the other canoe, which was just ahead, and had escaped all danger. This the lad did literally, but the water spouted up all round his arm.

"Never mind," exclaimed "Longshot," the chief of my canoe, "we shall go on till the next portage."

But the water kept rising and rising till we had three inches of it inside the canoe. This was more than I bargained for, and as the cargo would be injured even if we did not sink, I insisted on landing. The chief trouble was unlading the canoe; for a piece of bark sewed on with wattap, and covered over with gum melted with a burning stick, soon repaired the damage.

Thus we made good three hundred and eighty-one miles, counting the sinuosities of the course, and found ourselves encamped on the north-west corner of the beautiful Lake of the Woods. I say beautiful, for no part of North America presents more lovely and

picturesque lake scenery—here bare precipitous rocks, there abrupt timbered hills of every form, and gentle wooded slopes and open grassy areas, while islands of every variety of form and size dot the blue expanse.

There was the usual fog resting on the surface of the lake as I turned out in the morning before the rest of the party, whom I was about to rouse up, when my ear caught the sound of paddles approaching the camp. That they were Indians there could be no doubt, and I thought that they were probably on a journey and would pass by without observing us. Swiftfoot had not given the Wood Indians of this district the best of characters, yet, as they had always shown a friendly disposition towards the English, we heard, we had no cause to apprehend danger from them. Still, I knew that it was necessary when travelling in those regions to be on our guard, and I therefore stood still, expecting to hear the sound of the paddles gradually decrease as they passed by. Suddenly, however, a light puff of wind lifted the veil of mist, and exposed to view nearly a dozen large canoes filled with painted and feather-bedecked Indians, evidently a war-party, and coming directly for our camp.

“Indians! Quick, to your feet!” I shouted out, having no fancy to be murdered through too much ceremony, or by putting over-confidence in a band of savages.

In an instant Trevor stood with his revolver in one hand and his fowling-piece in the other, ready to do battle. Peter, with his fists doubled, and the rest with their different weapons prepared for use, while Ready showed his teeth and barked furiously to make amends for his previous carelessness.

On seeing our preparations a young chief stood up in

the bow of the leading canoe, and waving his hand, stated that he was coming on a peaceable errand.

"My father, the chief, will be here anon—he sent me on to announce his coming."

Finding that resistance would be almost hopeless if they meant evil, putting the best face we could on matters, we begged the young chief to land and sit down and smoke the calumet of peace, or, as Trevor expressed it, "take his pipe and make himself at home." He was a talkative youngster, and seemed very proud of having killed two or three men in a war expedition against the Sioux, from which he had just returned, exhibiting to our unpleased eyes the fresh scalps he had taken. We found that he had brought them all down at long shots. Indeed, Red-men, notwithstanding all that has been said in their praise by novel writers, have a very unheroic notion of fighting. Trevor called it an "unsportsmanlike way of bagging their game."

Our bloodthirsty young acquaintance smoked several pipes, drank a quart of tea, and talked of affairs in general, but left us as much in the dark as ever as to the reason of his coming, though he informed us that our fire had been seen in the evening; but that, unwilling to disturb us, he had postponed his visit till daylight. His followers had, meantime, landed and squatted round us in the most amicable manner—my dog Ready being the only one of the party who exhibited any hostile feeling, and he was in no way satisfied with the appearance of the ill-looking war-begrimed strangers. Our principal annoyance arose from being unable to proceed, which we could not venture to do till the appearance of the chief. At length his fleet of nearly twenty canoes hove in sight, and he soon landed, and with all the pomp and dignity

he could assume, demanded the reason of our passing through his country. We replied, through Swiftfoot, that we were on a journey of pleasure, desiring to pass on to the big sea in the far-west, to hunt the buffalo, and shoot a grizzly if we could ; in fact, to inspect the country and kill time.

After listening attentively, he gave a significant "ugh!" observing that we might or might not be speaking the truth, but that certainly we were more likely to meet pain than pleasure, that too many buffalo were hunted already, but that was no business of his, and that as to grizzlies, he knew nothing of them in his part of the country, nor of a big lake in the far-west, and that we could kill time far better at home ; but there was one thing he did know, that the white people had deceived the Red-men so often, and had occupied their lands, so that with his will no one should pass through his country, which lay between the Lake of the Woods and the Red River. We took a few minutes to deliberate what to say, and then instructed Swiftfoot to inform the chief that he was a very wise man, but that he was labouring under one slight error, the fact being that the whole country belonged to the Queen of England, that he and his people were her subjects, and that so were we ; that she desired all her subjects to be friendly to each other ; that she was very angry with those who were not, and made presents to those who were ; that we should set a good example by not passing through the country he claimed, though we were afraid she might be very much vexed at hearing of his want of courtesy, still to show him of our friendly disposition we proposed presenting him with some tobacco, hatchets, and blankets, although we had not come provided with presents. He

looked completely taken aback on hearing this, and ended by sending two of his young men as guides down the Winnipeg River, the course we had intended to pursue.

We visited an island in the lake, a large portion of which was cultivated, and produced Indian corn, potatoes, squashes, and pumpkins; pigeons and a variety of birds flew over our heads, and fish swarmed in the lakes and streams we passed through. We stopped on our way at two or three Hudson's Bay Company's trading posts. They are generally situated on commanding positions, surrounded by stockades which would serve to keep out a predatory party of Indians. We also visited a missionary station, that of Islington, established by an English lady, Mrs. Sandon, of Bath. The missionary, Mr. Macdonald, has long laboured among the Red-men, instructing them in the truths of the Gospel, teaching them agriculture, and educating their children in his schools with more success generally than the adults.

It took us nearly three weeks to voyage from Fort William to the mouth of the Red River, which we reached by a traverse across Lake Winnipeg. We ascended that river to a settlement of Christian Indians, presided over by an English clergyman, where we left our canoes and boatmen till we should again require them, and proceeded up, on horseback, to the main settlements, some rapids impeding this part of the navigation of the Red River.

In contrast to the wild scenery through which we had so long been travelling, the Selkirk settlements presented an aspect of civilization and advancement which we had not expected. There were good roads, houses, churches, schools, mills, stores, large farms and small

farms, and a cathedral and nunnery belonging to the Roman Catholics. There is no town in the settlement, but there is a large, tolerably strong fort, that of Fort Garry, on the point of land where the Assiniboine River falls into the Red River, and for twenty miles or so, on the banks of the two streams, the buildings I have described have been raised in groups or knots, forming separate hamlets, with, in most instances, a church and school-house for each. I might give a long and interesting account of the settlement, but such is not my aim. I will merely remark that the farms were well stocked, and showed a variety and an abundance of produce; that horses and cattle lived out and grew fat on the native grasses throughout the winter, that so too did pigs in the woods on acorns and roots; and that all the inhabitants required to become wealthy and prosperous, was a regular market for their produce.



CHAPTER XV.

WE GET UP A BUFFALO HUNT—WE ENGAGE STALKER AND GAROUBE, TWO HALF-CASTE HUNTERS—PEMMICAN—THE HUNT—I GET FLOORED BY A HUGE BISON, BUT AM CARRIED TO CAMP IN HIS SKIN—HOSTILE SIOUX, AND A BRUSH WITH THEM—WE CROSS THE ASSINIBOINE—LA PRAIRIE PORTAGE.

TREVOR and I now formed our first hunting expedition. Buffalo, or rather bison-hunting, had long been our day-dream, and had formed the chief subject of our conversation as we paddled along in our canoes, or when seated round our camp fires at night, so now we determined to make a beginning. We engaged a couple of half-breeds as guides and hunters, one was of English, the other of French parentage. One was called John Stalker, the other Pierre Garoupe. They were both bold, active fellows, and each amusingly tenacious of

the honour of the country from which his father came. There was no want of good horses in the settlement, courageous, hardy animals, trained to hunt the buffalo, and taught to stand still should their rider be thrown, or any accident happen to him. The carts of the country are built entirely of wood, without a nail, and consequently float across rivers, and if broken, are easily repaired. We bought four of these carts to carry our tent, provisions, ammunition, and clothing. A large body of half-breed hunters, with their wives and children, had gone on before, towards the south-west, where the buffalo were said to have appeared in great numbers, on their way to the northward, and we hoped, by pushing on, to overtake the band in time to see some of the sport.

John Stalker gave us much information about these hunting expeditions. Great regularity is observed. Each man has his own cart or carts and horses. The band is divided into companies, with a chief to each, and constables, and a leader over the whole, whose word is supreme both in camp and on the hunting field. We found ourselves in a new kind of scenery. Here and there were separate woods, but our course chiefly lay over the open prairie, a boundless expanse of waving grass. The greatest risk in dry weather in such a country is from fire; should it once become ignited no human power can arrest its progress, and Heaven have mercy on the hapless hunter whom it overtakes. The fleetest steed will scarcely escape if flying before it. We found from the fresh tracks that we were near the hunters, and at length we came upon them encamped, the women making pemmican, and the men cleaning their arms, or doing nothing. Pemmican is the staple food of all the hunters and travellers throughout the

country. In the Cree tongue *Pemmi* means meat, and *Kon* fat. The flesh of the buffalo is cut up in strips and hung on poles to dry. Then it is pounded between two stones till the fibres separate. About fifty pounds of this meat are put into a bag of buffalo skin with forty pounds of hot melted fat, thoroughly mixed with it. A nicer sort contains berries and sugar, and is highly prized. It keeps for years, subject to wet, cold, or damp. One pound is considered equal to three of ordinary meat.

Having introduced ourselves to the leader of the party, and invited him to come and sup with us, we encamped in a position he assigned to us, and made preparations for the next day's hunt. By early dawn, Trevor and I, followed by Peter, were in the saddle—the latter from his childhood had been accustomed to horses, and was now perfectly at home on horseback. I spoke of the Crees. They inhabit the country to the south and east of Lake Winnipeg, and the half-breeds are chiefly related to them on the mothers' side.

It was a fine sight to see the band of hunters marshalled in order, advance towards the spot where the buffaloes, as the bison are here called, were said to be feeding. I could not help thinking, as I watched them, what splendid light cavalry they would make, for the defence of the country against their encroaching neighbours, or mounted police, or irregular cavalry for any purpose. Trevor, too, was much struck with the scene. "We try to civilize the Red-men," he remarked; "very good, and I don't see any impossibility; but I do see the bungling manner in which we set about it. We try to make men who have been all their lives on horseback, or, with rifle in hand, have hunted buffaloes, deer, or grizzlies, or been accustomed to the trapping

of small game, sit quietly down as farmers, gardeners, or carpenters, and attend school and church, Sundays and week days, without any approach to amusement, or what is still more absurd, without finding them any market for the produce of their industry when they are industrious. Teach them Christianity, and civilize them by all means, but introduce canoe races, horse races, foot races, shooting matches, foot-ball, cricket, all sorts of games,—anything, in fact, suitable to their bodily and mental powers, and open up the country; send people to buy their produce, and employ them as postillions, mail carriers, ostlers, cattle drovers, ferry-men; and at the same time keep them as much as possible separate from white men, under good guidance and instruction, and I have some hope that they will not decrease in numbers, and that they will become civilized in reality as well as nominally.”

Trevor had got thus far when the advanced guard made a signal for silence to be kept. We each of us stood up in our stirrups, and looking out ahead caught sight of numberless dark objects covering the prairie, far as the eye could reach, from north to south.

The wind blew from them, so that we might hope to get near without being perceived. The hunters now examined their saddle-girths, loaded their guns, and looked to their primings or percussion caps, and filled their mouths with bullets that they might drop them into their guns, without wadding, while at full gallop. The elder we heard cautioning the less experienced, and with good reason, not to shoot each other—a contingency I thought very likely to occur. Cautiously at first we approached the herd, clutching our weapons and bending forward eagerly, ready to dash on at a moment's notice. Before us was a very

large herd of buffaloes. On we went still unperceived—even the sagacious horses seemed to tread cautiously. At length some of the nearest animals lifted up their shaggy bearded heads. Our leader gave the signal—we were discovered. No further need now for silence. Our steeds sprang forward—off we dashed, and, scampering along at full speed, were soon in the midst of the more tardy-moving animals, each hunter firing right and left into the animal nearest him on either hand. It was like a naval engagement in days of yore, when a British fleet got among the enemy. In this instance, each hunter was widely separated from his companions, and only now and then the unfortunate chase turned to show fight. Even that was hopeless, for the well-trained horse, wheeling or leaping aside, knew as well as his rider how to avoid the charge of the furious buffalo, which was certain in the course of a few seconds to be brought low.

As each hunter killed an animal he dropped some article of his property to denote his prey, a handkerchief, tobacco box, knife, steel, and then galloped on, slaughtering right and left. I had told Peter to keep near me, lest any accident should happen to the lad; but carried away by the excitement of the chase, he separated from me, and Trevor very quickly disappeared. I was in high glee, for I had rolled over two buffaloes in succession. On I galloped, and brought down a third. I fired at a fourth, a huge bull, but though I hit him he did not fall, and before I could check the speed of my horse to load, the animal put his foot in a badger's hole, and down he came, throwing me over his head. As I was on my way to the ground it seemed I looked up and beheld the huge buffalo, with his hairy head bent down, dashing towards me. I

had no power of defending myself. I saw his red, fiery eyes close to me, felt his hot breath on my cheek, and gave myself up for lost. I remembered nothing more but a most horrible sensation of suffocation. I had remained some time in that condition, when I heard voices near me, and recognised Peter's tones. "Yes, yes, that is my dear master," he exclaimed. "Yes, Master Stalker, and he be coming to life again, I do believe. Hurra! hurra!"

On this I felt myself lifted up and carried to a little distance, when I was again put down. In a few minutes I was placed in a litter formed, I afterwards found, of the skin of the very buffalo which had so nearly finished me.

The shots I had put into him, though not instantaneously fatal, had produced his death at the moment he was about to gore me, and his huge body had fallen over, completely above me. Poor Peter, when the hunt was over, and the hunters were returning to camp, had searched about for me in every direction, till he was in perfect despair. At length a buffalo I had killed was discovered, and my course tracked till I was found under the body of my fourth victim. The lad had killed a buffalo, and Trevor boasted of knocking over six, so that he was well content with this result of his first hunt in British North America.

A considerable number of animals had been killed, and now the carts came up to carry off the flesh to be converted forthwith into pemmican, in the manner already described. There was a terrible waste of food even in this instance.

I was for several days unable to mount my horse, but had recovered completely by the time the pemmican was prepared and the camp broken up. It had been

arranged that we were to begin the homeward march the next day, when the scouts, always kept actively employed on such occasions, brought in word that they had discovered the trail of a band of Sioux, their hereditary foes, and had followed it up till they found them encamped not more than a day's journey from where we were—in American territory. A council of war was held immediately. It was agreed by the hunters that if they did not attack the Sioux, the Sioux would follow and attack them and take them unawares.

Trevor and I at once came to the opinion that it was our duty to be non-combatants; and, indeed, we counselled our friends to retreat without attacking the Sioux, and to trust to their own vigilance not to be taken by surprise. This advice was very unpalatable to the tastes of the hunters, and was totally disregarded. As far as the principles of the half-breeds are concerned we found them very little in advance of the Indians, though they pique themselves, as a mark of their civilization, on not taking scalps. Trevor even offered to visit the camp of the Sioux, and to try and negotiate terms of peace. To this proposal, however, they would not a moment listen, declaring that he would lose his life in the attempt. The council broke up, and a war party having been arranged, forthwith set out. They advanced with caution, with scouts thrown out to examine any ground which could possibly afford a spot for an ambush.

We rode on with them for some distance, and in vain again urged them to abandon so utterly profitless an expedition—certain as it was also, even should they be victorious in the present instance, to make their enemies retaliate on some future occasion. I believe that the women of the party regarded us with a considerable

amount of contempt when we returned to the camp in consequence of our interference. Peter, however, explained to the fair dames that although we refused to attack men who had never injured us, we would fight for them like heroes if they were attacked. This assurance seemed to restore us to their good opinion. Two days passed, and the war-party returned, looking haggard and travel-stained. They boasted of having killed sixteen of the enemy, but as they had certainly lost five of their own men and had no trophies to show, we questioned this statement. There were also, we pointed out to them, as the result of their exploit, three widows in the camp and a dozen fatherless children whom they were bound to support.

We immediately began our return homewards. The camp remained quiet all night, but the next morning several horses were missing, and two scouts, at no great distance, were found killed and scalped. The following day a Cree hunter lost his life, but our friends showed no inclination to turn back on the enemy. They were, I found, so completely down-hearted at the loss they had sustained in consequence of their own folly, that they exhibited none of that courage and daring which they undoubtedly possess. Still I am convinced that, well led, they are men capable of performing the most daring exploits. As we did not wish to return to Fort Garry, while they kept to the right, we crossed the Assiniboine River and went on to La Prairie Portage, a settlement of Christian Indians, presided over by Archdeacon Cochrane, who has devoted the whole of his life to the service of these children of the wilderness. The settlement appeared in a flourishing condition. There are two churches, a number of neat cottages, and many well-cultivated and well-stocked farms.



CHAPTER XVI.

ANIMALS OF THE WILDERNESS—THE SIOUX AGAIN—AN ENCAMPMENT OF CREN INDIANS—BUFFALO POUNDS—TO THE RED RIVER.

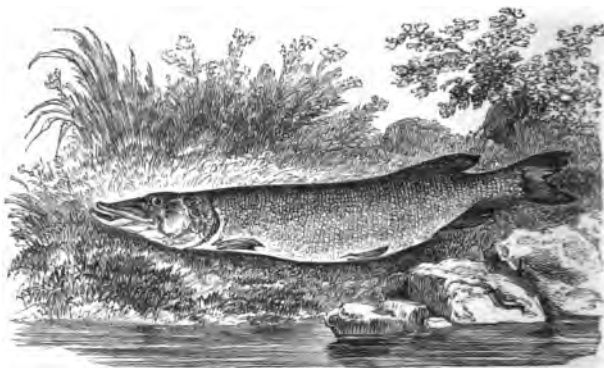
WE remained here a couple of days to rest our cattle and put our carts in order, and then pushed on by the back trail due west across the prairie towards Fort Ellis. We encountered wonderfully few difficulties in our progress, though we met with not a few adventures. Everywhere rabbits were plentiful, as were all sorts of wild fowl, so that we fared sumptuously. We noticed humming birds and locusts or grasshoppers, as they are here called, innumerable. Vast flights passed over our heads, appearing like silvery clouds in the sky. So voracious are they that they destroyed every article of clothing left on the grass. Saddles, girths, leather bags, and clothes

were devoured without distinction. Ten minutes sufficed them, as some of our men found to their cost, to destroy several garments which had been carelessly left on the ground. Looking upwards at the sun as near as the light would permit, we saw the sky continually changing colour, according to the numbers in the passing clouds of insects. Opposite the sun the prevailing hue was a silver white, continually flashing. The hum produced by so many millions of wings is indescribable, sounding something like a singing in our



ears. These locusts are, as may be supposed, the great enemies to the farmers of these regions—their greatest, even before early and late frosts. Fortunately they do not come every year. We fell in with a few black bears and wolves, and with red deer and elks,

buffaloes, and other wild animals, so that we had plenty of fresh meat for the table, besides wild fowl and fish, amongst which is a delicious variety of pike, named by the original French Canadians, from the peculiar formation of its mouth and head, *Masque alonge*, Long-face. Beavers have become almost extinct, and so have panthers; but in our fishing expeditions we found that otters were still plentiful. Our plan of encamping was somewhat different from that we adopted when voyaging in canoes. At night, our fires



being lit, we assembled round them to cook our provisions, and to escape the breeze-fly and mosquitoes and other insects which the smoke keeps away. Sending out scouts to ascertain that no Red-skins were in the neighbourhood, who would steal our animals if they could, we turned them loose, knowing that they would not stray far. One night, however, one of our scouts reported that he had seen something approach the brow of the hill about two hundred yards off, and that after gazing at the encampment it had disappeared; but

whether it was a two-legged or four-legged creature he could not say.

The next night, as I was going my rounds, I distinctly heard a horse neigh. This, when I reported it, with the occurrence of the previous night, made our guides sure that we were watched by Sioux, and that they would attempt to steal our horses. Our camp-fires were therefore put out, the carts placed close together, the animals brought in and tethered, and a watch set. The general opinion was, however, that no attack would be made till near dawn. Still, it would be unwise to trust to that. The horses, after a time, became restless. Ready also showed, by his low growls, that he fancied enemies were in the neighbourhood. Our half-breeds, accordingly, crawling through the grass, arranged themselves in a half-circle about seventy yards from the carts, each with his gun loaded with buck-shot. The night was dark, and not a word was spoken above a whisper. Towards morning a scout came in to report that he had heard a person or animal crossing the river—that it came near him and then passed on near the camp. On this he judged it time to follow—that it had come within thirty yards of the tents, when Ready had growled, and that then turning off it had recrossed the river. On hearing this, we became still more anxious than ever, expecting every moment an attack. When morning dawned we discovered that we had been completely surrounded by Indians; who, however, perceiving that we were on the alert and that the horses were tethered, abandoned the attempt to steal them.

This circumstance taught us the necessity for constant caution, at the same time it showed us that the Red-skins could not be very desperate or blood-thirsty

characters, or they would have attacked us in a far bolder manner. Some days after this our leading scout galloped in, announcing that he had come upon a large encampment of Crees near which we must pass. We closed up immediately and stood to our arms, not knowing whether the strangers would prove to be friends or foes. In the meantime we sent Stalker forward as an ambassador to announce our arrival, and to express a wish on our part to have an interview with their chief. Our envoy had not been long absent when a band of sixty Cree horsemen appeared in sight, galloping rapidly towards us—wild-looking fellows, many of them naked with the exception of the cloth and belts, and armed with bows and spears, while a few with more garments had firearms. They were headed by a gaily-dressed youth, with a spangled coat, and feathers in his hair, who announced himself as the son of the chief, and stated that he was sent forward to conduct us to their camp.

We accordingly begged him and his followers to dismount, and made them welcome with the never-failing calumet. He informed us that his tribe was engaged in buffalo hunting or rather trapping, and that they were about to construct a new pound, having filled the present one with buffalo, but had been compelled to abandon it on account of the stench which arose from the putrefying bodies; and he expressed a wish that we would watch them filling the new pound. After the young chief, whose name sounded and might I believe have been literally rendered Fistycuff, had sat smoking an hour he proposed setting out for the camp. We accordingly ordered an advance, and rode on talking pleasantly without the slightest fear of treachery. As we neared the Cree camp we saw the women employed

in moving their goods, being assisted in this operation by large numbers of dogs, each dog having two poles harnessed to him, on which a load of meat, pemmican, or camp furniture was laid.

Having pitched our camp and enjoyed another official smoke, young Fistycuff invited us to see the old buffalo pound, in which during the past week they had been entrapping buffalo. We accepted the offer, and with as much dignity as if he was about to show us some delightful pleasure-grounds, he led us to a little valley, through a lane of branches of trees which are called "dead men," to the gate or trap of the pound. The branches are called "dead," or "silent men" rather, from the office they perform of keeping the buffalo in a straight line as they are driven towards the pound. A most horrible and disgusting sight broke upon us as we ascended the hill overlooking the pound. Within a circular fence of a hundred and twenty feet in diameter, constructed of the trunks of trees laced together with withes, and braced by outside supports, lay, tossed in every conceivable position, upwards of two hundred dead buffaloes. From old bulls to calves, animals of every description were huddled together in all the forced attitudes of a violent death. Some lay on their backs with their eyes starting from their heads, and their tongues thrust out through clotted gore. Others were impaled on the horns of the old and strong bulls, others again which had been tossed were lying with broken backs, two and three deep. The young chief and his people looked upon the dreadful and sickening scene with evident delight, and described how such and such a bull or cow had exhibited feats of wonderful strength in the death-struggle.

The flesh of many of the cows had been taken off, and was drying in the sun on stages near the tents to make pemmican. The odour was almost overpowering, and millions of large blue flesh-flies were humming and buzzing over the putrefying bodies.

After we had refreshed ourselves—as Fistycuff expressed a hope that we had done—with this spectacle, he begged that we would ride on to the new pound. It was formed in the same way. From it two lines of trees were placed, extending to a distance of four miles into the prairie, each tree being about fifty feet from the others, forming a road about two miles wide, all the mouths gradually narrowing towards the pound. Men had concealed themselves behind the trees, and the hunters having succeeded in driving a herd into the road, they rose and shook their robes on any attempt being made to break away from it. Now on came the herd rushing forward at headlong speed. Now an Indian would dart out from behind a tree and shake his robe as an animal showed an inclination to break out of the line, and as quietly again retreat. At the entrance of the pound there was a strong trunk of a tree about a foot from the ground, and on the inner side an excavation sufficiently deep to prevent the buffalo from leaping back when once in the pound. The buffaloes closed in one on the other, the space they occupied narrowing till they became one dense mass, and then, ignorant of the trap prepared for them, they leaped madly over the horizontal trunk. As soon as they had taken the fatal spring, they began to gallop round and round the ring fence, looking for a chance of escape; but with the utmost silence, the men, women, and children who stood close together surrounding the fence, held out their robes before every orifice until the

whole herd was brought in. They then climbed to the top of the fence, and joined by the hunters who had closely followed the helpless buffalo, darted their spears or shot with bows or firearms at the bewildered animals, now frantic with rage and terror on finding themselves unable to escape from the narrow limits of the pound.

A great number had thus been driven in and killed, and we were about retiring from the horrid spectacle, at the risk of bringing on ourselves the contempt of our hosts, when one wary old bull espying a narrow crevice which had not been closed by the robes of those on the outside, made a furious dash and broke through the fence. In spite of the frantic efforts of the Indians to close it up again, the half-maddened survivors followed their leader, and before their impetuous career could be stopped they were galloping helter-skelter among the sand hills, with the exception of a dozen or so which were shot down by arrows or bullets as they passed along in their furious course.

In consequence of the wholesale and wanton destruction of the buffalo, an example of which we witnessed, they have greatly diminished. We were not surprised afterwards to hear the old chief say, that he remembered the time when his people were as numerous as the buffalo now are, and the buffalo were as thick as the trees of the forest. We spent two very interesting days with him, and then turned our horses' heads towards the Red River, that we might prepare for a canoe voyage on the lakes and up the Saskatchewan, which we had resolved to make.



CHAPTER XVII.

HIGH STATE OF CULTIVATION OF SETTLEMENTS—RUPERT'S LAND—
THE RAPIDS—LAKE WINNIPEG—OUR BIVOUAC—PETER NEARLY
"DROWNED AND DEAD"—HOW WE CAUGHT FISH—THE
SWAMPIES, AND THEIR MODE OF FISHING—AN OJIBWAY MIS-
SIONARY STATION—THE SALT SPRINGS—PAS MISSION—FORT A
LA CARNE.

As our object was to see as much as possible of Central
British America, we sent John Stalker with two of our
carts laden with stores and provisions, on to Fort à la
Carne, situated near the junction of the two branches
of the Saskatchewan River, there to await our arrival,
while we travelled back to Red River, there to embark
in our canoes, and to voyage in them through Lake
Winnipeg and up the North Saskatchewan. Travelling
as we did with an abundance of food, and without any
fear of knocking up our animals, we made rapid
journeys, and were soon again at Red River. I will
not stop to describe the really comfortable dwellings,

the wheat-producing farms, the herds of fat cattle, and the droves of pigs we met as we approached the settlement. Neither Trevor nor I had any idea that a spot existed, so remote from the Atlantic on one side, and the Pacific on the other, containing a community possessed of so many sources of wealth. All the farmers we spoke to explained to us that they only wanted one thing, and that was a market, or in other words, settlers who would come and buy their produce.

"But if settlers come they will produce food for themselves," remarked Trevor.

"So a few of them will," answered the farmer. "But there will also come butchers, and bakers, and carpenters, and masons, and magistrates, and policemen, and soldiers, and numbers of other people who will produce nothing, and they will gladly buy what we have to sell. Just open up the country, sir. Make it easy for people to reach us from Canada; establish settlements from this to the westward to British Columbia, and not only we, but all who come here will be, ere long, on the fair way to wealth and prosperity."

"Yes, sir, sure of it, certain of it," cried Trevor. "It must become known before long, and appreciated. At least I should say so, if we were not so terribly slow to move in England. The next generation will accomplish the work if not this, that's one comfort."

"Small comfort to us, sir, in the meantime," answered the farmer. "We shall be stagnating, growing old and rusty; or may be the Yankees will be beforehand and open up communication between the Atlantic and Pacific, while folks in England are only talking about it."

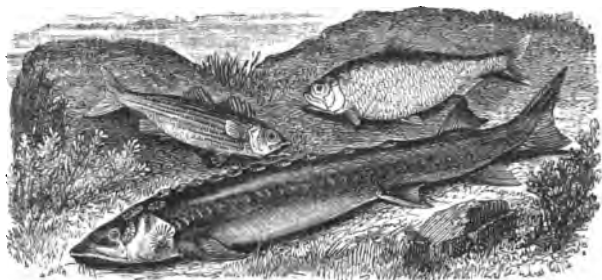
"I'll write a book as soon as I get home, and tell

them all about it," cried Trevor. "I'll make your case known—the case of the country I should say, I'll tell old and young—the boys of England if the men won't listen—so that the boys may take it up when they grow older and able to act."

The farmer shook his head, and thought that Jack was slightly cracked when he talked thus. For my own part I believe that the people of England will, before long, be made to understand the importance of the subject, though it may be said that neither Jack nor I writing about it for the rising generation will do much good, and therefore I will drop the subject and go ahead with our adventures.

We found Swiftfoot, with the rest of our men, eager to be off, and the two canoes in perfect order. I think that I mentioned that the Red River runs for two or three hundred miles, or more, from the United States territory, through Rupert's Land, into Lake Winnipeg. For the whole of this distance it is navigable, with the exception of a portion near the mouth, where some fierce rapids exist, over which even canoes cannot pass. We consequently had to embark below these rapids. We slept for the last time in a house for many a day at the Indian settlement, and shoving off from the shore, soon passed through one of the reedy bank mouths of the Red River, into the open lake. The wind was contrary, but as there was not much of it, we paddled boldly on through the lake. It was curious to feel ourselves traversing what looked like an arm of the sea, in fabrics of a nature so frail as was that of our birch-bark canoes. What mere specks we must have appeared on the wide waters. The shore was clothed chiefly with aspens, birch and willow, and here and there bare limestone rocks appeared, the scenery having altogether

a very wild and uncultivated look. There are many islands. On one of them we landed to rest and dine, intending to paddle on afterwards till it was time to camp for the night. While some of us were lighting



fires, and making other preparations for a meal, Swift-foot and three other men went out to fish, and soon returned with sufficient sturgeon, shad and bass, to feast the whole party.

Whether at home amidst all the comforts of civilization, or out in the uncultivated wilds still almost untrodden by man, a good dinner is a pleasant and soothing thing, and little do I envy that person whose heart is dead to gratitude to the great Giver for the gift. Here in the wilderness, His oxen covering a thousand hills, and delicious fowl and fish daily furnishing our meal, we never separated from table without sending up thanks to Him in simple words.

Refreshed in mind and body, away we went at a great rate before the breeze, with our square sail of cotton set. The Indians make their sails of the same material that they do their canoes, of birch bark. It will not stand a heavy gale, neither will their canoes, so they always keep in harbour, or rather hauled up high and dry on such occasions. Lake Winnipeg i

like a wasp's body, very narrow in one part and broad at the ends. It runs north-west and south-east, and is about two hundred and eighty miles long, and fifty-seven broad, at its widest part. Our course was along the centre of the widest part of the southern end. With a bright moon, not to lose the favourable breeze, we ran on all night, eager to reach the mouth of the Saskatchewan, which it is possible to do from Red River in three days, and which will be done regularly when steamers are placed on the lake. What very unromantic and common-place ideas—steamers and Red Indians, and the far-west and cornfields!—the truth is, that romance is disappearing before the march of civilization; however, no fear but that we should meet with adventures before long. After passing the narrow part of the lake we were paddling on towards evening in the hopes of gaining an island, where it was proposed that we should camp. The sky had been clear but clouds began to appear in the north-east, increasing quickly in numbers till they covered the sky, and a heavy swell rolled in towards us, such as would not be thought much of by those on board the *Great Eastern*, but which to us, embarked in frail bark canoes, was somewhat formidable; and then foaming waves arose and tossed us about till we expected every moment that the canoes would be upset. We paddled on with all our might against the fast rising gale to reach the shelter of the island, which we saw in the far distance.

The matter was growing serious, for every instant the waves were increasing in height. It seemed scarcely possible that our light canoes could float much longer. The force of the water alone was sufficient to crumple them up. Peter looked very pale,

but said nothing, and baled away perseveringly, while our *voyageurs* paddled bravely on, facing the danger like men. Now we rose on the top of a huge sea foaming and bubbling and curling round us, and then down we sank again in the hollow, and it appeared that the next sea which we saw rolling on fierce and angry must overwhelm us, and so it would had we stayed where we were, but our buoyant canoes rose up the watery hill, and there we were on the top ready to plunge down on the other side. It was an anxious time. An accident to one canoe would have proved the destruction of both, for unless we had deserted our companions, in attempting to save them both would probably have perished. Our only chance would have been to throw all the lading out of the canoes and to cling on to them till we might be washed on shore. All we could feel was that, by dint of great exertions, we were making progress towards the island. We encouraged each other also by guessing how many yards we had made during each ten minutes. More than once I thought that we should go down, and at length a sea higher than its predecessors came rolling on, and I heard Trevor's voice cry out that the canoe was filling and that they were sinking, urging us to paddle on and not to attempt to save them. I looked round—they had disappeared—my heart sank—we were leading, we could not have turned back without certain destruction—our only chance was to keep working away head to wind. I knew that, yet I longed to make an attempt to rescue my friend and his companions. I dared not look back. I thought that I should see them struggling in the waves, and yet not be able to stretch out a hand to help them. Presently I heard a voice. It was Jack's—in cheery tones singing out—

"All right, Jolly; we've got rid of our ballast and will soon be up with you."

I was thankful, indeed, to hear him, and little heeded the loss of the lading of which he spoke; though, as it consisted chiefly of our provisions, it was a serious matter. I did look round for an instant, and then he was paddling on as if nothing had been the matter. Still, we had a long way to go and darkness was coming on. My motto has always been "persevere—never give in while life remains." So we paddled on. I had begun to fear, however, that we should never reach the island, when, on our port bow, as a sailor would say, appeared some low shrubs growing out of, not the water, but a sandbank which the dancing waves had before prevented us seeing. Had we gone on a few minutes longer and been driven on it to windward, though we might, for the moment, have escaped with our lives, our canoes must have been dashed in pieces and all our store and provisions destroyed and lost. I pointed it out to Trevor just in time; and now allowing our canoes to drop astern a little we found ourselves in comparatively smooth water, under the lee of the bank. Rather than risk proceeding further, especially as the channel between the bank and the island was rougher than any part, we agreed to land.

In a strong boat this is an easy matter, but a stone or a branch may drive a hole in an instant through a thin birch canoe. As soon, therefore, as we neared the shore we jumped out and lifted our canoes on to firm ground. I will not call it dry, for the spray completely covered it. Still we had reason to be thankful that we had escaped the great danger to which we had been exposed. We had very little light left us,

but we picked out the highest and driest spot among the bushes we could find, though neither very high nor very dry, and there we managed to camp. We had no hopes of keeping our tent standing, and, indeed, before we could light a fire it was necessary to construct a screen to protect it from the wind. This we did with some sticks and birch-bark and shrubs washed on shore, and under it we all crouched down to try and dry our wet garments—when we had, after no little trouble, lighted our fire. The only wood we could get to burn was found under bushes and other sheltered places. Our crews were greatly fatigued with their exertions, and wrapping themselves up in their buffalo robes, they were soon asleep, as was Peter. Trevor and I also being very tired were preparing to follow their example—indeed, in spite of the storm, we could scarcely keep awake. We made up our fire as well as we could, hoping that it would continue burning till somebody awoke to replenish it. We persuaded ourselves that it was useless to keep watch, as no hostile Indians could approach us; nor could any wild beasts; our canoes were secured, and the fire was so placed that it could not injure us.

“Good night, old fellow,” said Trevor, drowsily. “Wake me when the storm is over, for we shall not be able to move till then.”

“Of course,” said I. “But if you wake first rouse me up.”

“Oh, yes. I say, Har—that’s it—just what——”

Trevor’s attempt to speak more failed him—or, at all events, I did not hear him, and we were both asleep. In my sleep, however, I heard the storm raging and the water dashing against the sandbank. Suddenly I was conscious that I was lifted from the ground—

there was a hissing noise, and I felt very cold. I sprang to my feet, shouting out to the rest of the party, who were soon spluttering and jumping and crying out, not knowing what had happened or was going to happen. I very quickly guessed; a wave had broken over the bank, and as yet we could not discover who or what it had carried off, as it had completely extinguished the fire. I shouted out, demanding if all hands were there. Trevor, Swiftfoot, Pierre Garoupe, and the other *voyageurs* answered; but Peter made no reply. Again I shouted—no one answered. We felt for the spot where he had lain, but he was not there.

“Poor fellow, he must be lost!” I exclaimed.

Just then I heard a cry, and Ready, who had disappeared, gave a bark. Guided by the sound, I stumbled on to the spot, and there, caught in a bush and half in the water, I found a human being whom I recognised as Peter, from his exclamation—

“Oh, sir, we shall all be drowned and dead!”

With considerable exertion I managed to drag him up to the top of the bank again; and it was some time before he recovered. Some of the party ran to the canoes—they were safe as yet—but the storm was raging more furiously than ever, and should another wave wash over our bank they might be carried bodily away, when, unless seen by passing Indians, we should be left to starve.

To light another fire was impossible, as by this time all the wood around was thoroughly saturated. So there we sat or stood the livelong night, holding on to bushes or to paddles or other pieces of wood stuck in the ground to enable us to resist any other wave which should be driven over the bank. I have passed several disagreeable nights in my life, but that was one of the

most disagreeable. All I can say is that it might have been worse. I would rather have been there than racked with pain on a bed of sickness—or on an iceberg—or in an open boat in the South Pacific, parched with thirst—or in a dungeon, or in many other disagreeable places. So we sat quiet, and tried to amuse ourselves by talking. Wet damps the pipes, I have observed, of the most determined songster or whistler; so that although two or three of us began a tune, it speedily stopped.

The storm raged as furiously as ever, the waves coming one after the other rolling up the bank; and, as we watched them, it appeared as if each successive one must advance beyond its predecessors and sweep us away. Poor Peter, after his former experience, was very much alarmed.

"Here it comes again, sir; here it comes. 'Twill be all over with us!" he cried out, as a huge roller capped with foam, looking vastly higher than it really was, came onwards towards the bank. It struck the solid ground, which it palpably shook. Then on it came, curling over, up, up, up. The water reached us; we sprang to our feet, holding each other's hands and bending forward to resist its power united to the fury of the wind. It scarcely, however, reached to our ankles. While some of the mass rushed over the bank, the greater part flowed back, to be again hurled forward yet with diminished strength against the opposing barrier.

The dawn will come in spite of the darkness of the longest night; and as this was a short one, we were agreeably surprised to find it breaking, though, in the uncertain light, the waters looked more foaming and agitated than they appeared to be when the day was more advanced.

Gradually, too, the wind fell, the rollers ceased to strike the bank with their former fury, and though after a storm on the ocean days pass before it becomes calm, scarcely had the wind dropped than the surface



of the lake became proportionately smooth. The sun came out, and its powerful rays dried our clothes and sticks sufficient to boil our kettle. After a hearty breakfast, we repaired our canoes with fresh gum, and continued our voyage.

As Trevor had been compelled to throw overboard so much of our provisions, we were anxious to secure some more to prevent the necessity of sending back to Red River. Swiftfoot told us of a river near at hand

where large quantities of fine fish can always be caught—the Jack-fish River. Towards it we steered, and, after proceeding up a little way, came upon a weir, or “basket,” as it is called, erected across it by the Indians. It was much broken; but a number of Turkey buzzards hovered around, ready to pounce on any fish which might get into it. Our Indians immediately set to work to repair it. Indians, like other savages, are very industrious when hungry, and idle in the extreme when their appetites are satisfied. Our fellows were, fortunately for us, hungry, and so they worked with a will. The weir consisted of a fence of poles stretching completely across the river and sloping in the direction of the current, so that the water could pass freely through. On one side there was an opening in this palisade, near the bank, about a yard in width, leading into a rectangular box with a grated bottom sloping upwards, through which the water flowed with perfect ease. The fish in the day-time see the weir, and either swim back or jump over it; but at night, hoping to avoid it, they dart through the opening, not observing the impediment beyond. Swimming on, they at length find themselves high and dry on the upper part of the grated trap or pound. The fisherman sits by the side of it with a wooden mallet in his hand, with which he knocks the larger fish on the head as they appear, and then pitches them out on the bank to be in readiness for his squaw, who appears in the morning to clean and cut them up.

We repaired the weir before dark, and, camping near it, after supper set to work to catch fish in this, to us, novel manner. We divided the party into watches, so that fish-catching and cleaning went on all night. I began, with Swiftfoot to assist me. I knocked the fish

on the head, and he threw them out, while a whole gang were employed in splitting and cleaning them. No sooner were the shades of evening cast over the river than the hapless fish began to dash into our trap. The masque-along, a huge pike, first made his appearance, his further progress being effectually stopped; and he was soon on the grass in the hands of the cleaners. Five or six gold-eyes next appeared, and then a sucking-carp and three perch, or, more correctly, well-eyed pike. The *voyageurs* had lighted a fire, and those not engaged in fishing sat up to eat the fish caught by their companions as fast as they could cook them. Ready, who had been on short commons lately, especially relished his share. As we had formed two pounds, one on each bank of the river, and had relays of fish-catchers, we entrapped between three and four hundred fish of the sorts I have mentioned. Had we possessed a sufficient supply of salt, we might have effectually preserved them. We pickled all we could, and dried in the sun and with smoke those we did not immediately eat.

The lake being calm, the following day we continued our voyage to the mouth of the Little Saskatchewan River, which, it will be seen, communicates with Lake Manitobah, close to which there are some valuable salt works. The wind was fair up the river, but foul for proceeding to the works by the lake. Setting sail, we ran merrily along under sail, overtaking a fleet of Indian canoes belonging to a tribe of Swampies, each with a birch-bark sail. At night we camped, and our Swampy friends coming up with us, did the same near a rapid, where they immediately began to fish. This they did from their canoes. One man paddled and another stood in the bow of the

canoe with a net like a landing net at the end of a long pole. As his quick eye detected a fish he dipped his net as a scoop or ladle is used, and each time brought up a fish three or four pounds weight. I may safely say that I saw an Indian, in the course of a few minutes, catch twenty-five white fish. If these people better knew the method of preserving their fish they need never suffer, as they often do, from hunger.

That morning, the wind being foul, the poor squaws were employed in tracking the canoes along the banks of the river. After watching them for some time as they came up towards our camp Peter went forward, and in dumb show, offered to help them, whereat he was treated by the ladies with silent contempt, while his companions saluted him with shouts of hearty laughter. I cannot describe the scenery fully of this curious mixture of lake and stream through which we passed. The banks are generally low—now the water rushed through a narrow passage formed of huge boulders of rocks—now it expanded into a fine lake. Once we forced our way through a vast natural rice field extending for miles, affording food for birds innumerable, and to as many Indians as took the trouble to collect it. They run their canoes into the midst of a spot where the rice is the thickest, and bending down the tall stalks, shake them till they have a full cargo. At length we reached, what we little expected to find in that remote region, a large comfortable cottage in the midst of a well-cultivated and productive farm, surrounded by a number of smaller but neat dwellings. This was an Indian missionary station, where upwards of a hundred and fifty Indian men, women, and children, permanently reside under

the superintendence of a devoted English missionary and his wife, assisted by a highly-educated young lady who had lately come out from England to join them. She has learned the Ojibway language, so as to devote her attention most profitably to the education of the children. We visited the school, and it was interesting to see the way in which the little dark-skinned creatures listened to the words which came from the young lady's lips, and the intelligent answers they gave, as our interpreters translated them, to the questions she put.

There was a service in Ojibway, consisting of prayers, a chapter in the Bible, singing, and a short address, which we attended. The congregation was most attentive, and a considerable number of heathen Indians came in to listen. The service was rather short, but I have no doubt that the excellent missionary considered it wiser to send his hearers away wishing for more, and resolved to come again to listen, than with a feeling of weariness, and declaring that it should be the last time they would set foot within those walls. The missionary's own cottage was excessively neat and pretty, both inside and out, he feeling, evidently, that it must serve as a model, as he himself, in a degree, was to his converts. Their abodes were, indeed, very superior to those of heathen Indians, while their fields, cultivated in a much better manner than are those found generally among the Indian tribes, are made to produce Indian corn, potatoes, and a variety of other vegetables. There was nothing very curious or romantic in the short visit we paid to this missionary station in the wilderness, yet it was truly one of the most really interesting, thus to find a church in the wilderness performing its duty effectually of converting the heathen from their gross ignorance and sin to a knowledge and

practice of the truth. Not far off was a Hudson's Bay Company's post, and, like some previous travellers we afterwards met, we had to complain of the scenes of drunkenness and vice which took place among the heathen Indians encamped outside it. The Company prohibits the sale of liquor to Indians; but notwithstanding this large quantities are given away to induce them to sell their peltries cheap, and to gamble away their property, so that they must go forth again to hunt. Thus the missionaries are unable to obtain an influence over them, and the unhappy race are dying from three causes—from drunkenness, from hardships, and from scarcity of food, which, as hunters for fur-bearing animals, they are unable to provide for themselves and families. In my opinion, by means of missionaries who can impart Christian knowledge, and instruction in agricultural and other useful arts, with the opening up of markets for the result of their industry, can alone the rapid decrease of the Indian race be arrested.

After a pleasant stay of a couple of days at this promising station, we proceeded on our voyage to the Salt Springs. After passing into Lake Winnepegosis, we reached the springs, which are situated about four hundred yards from the lake shore, on a barren area of about ten acres of extent, but a few feet above the level of the lake. The whole shore of the lake is said to contain salt springs. At this spot there are some forty or fifty springs, though rather less than thirty wells have been dug by the manufacturers, whose works consist of three log-huts, three evaporating furnaces, and some large iron kettles or boilers. When a fresh spring is discovered a well five feet broad and five deep is excavated and a hut and furnace erected near it. The brine from the wells is ladled into the kettles, and as

the salt forms it is scooped out and allowed to remain a short time to drain before it is packed in birch-bark baskets for transportation to the settlements. The brine is so strong that thirty gallons of brine produce a bushel of salt; and from each kettle, of which there are eight or nine, two bushels can be made in a day in dry weather. Some freighters' boats were taking in cargo at the portage on Lake Manitobah for the Red River as well as for other parts, and we here also took on board as much as we could carry; having purchased several bushels besides, to be brought on to the mouth of the Little Saskatchewan, that we might salt some white fish to serve us for future use.

We might have proceeded by a more direct route—through Lake Winnipegosis—to the mouth of the Great Saskatchewan, but we wished to navigate the large lake from one end to the other. We accomplished all we proposed in five days—reached the mouth of the rapid and gold-bearing Great Saskatchewan. Near the entrance is a long and fierce rapid, which it was necessary for us to mount, before we could again reach water on which we could navigate our canoes. It is nearly two miles in length. The water from above comes on smoothly and steadily; then, suddenly, as if stimulated to action by some sudden impulse, it begins to leap and foam and roll onward till it forms fierce and tumultuous surges, increasing in size till they appear like the rolling billows of a tempestuous sea, ready to engulf any boat venturing over them. In the one case, on the ocean, the movement is caused by the wind above; in the present instance by that of the water itself passing over an incline of rough rocks beneath.

Having partly unladen our canoes, leaving two men in alone, one to steer and the other to fend off the rocks,

the rest of us harnessed ourselves to the end of a long tow line, with straps round our bodies, and commenced tracking them up the rapid along a path at the top of the cliffs. It was very hard work, as we had to run and leap and scramble along the slippery and jagged rocks alongside the cataract.

It was curious to know that we were still in the very heart of a vast continent, and yet to be navigating a river upwards of half-a-mile in width. After proceeding twenty miles we passed through Cross Lake, and soon afterwards entered Cedar Lake, which is thirty miles long and twenty broad. We had now to proceed for some hundred miles up this hitherto little-known river, which, rising in the Rocky Mountains, is navigable very nearly the whole distance from their base. As we were sailing we were agreeably surprised, on turning a point, to see before us on the right bank of the river, in the midst of fields of waving corn, a somewhat imposing church, whose tall spire, gilt by the last rays of the evening sun, was mirrored in the gliding river; a comfortable looking parsonage; a large and neat school-house, and several other dwelling-houses and cottages. This proved to be the Pas Mission, one of the many supported by the Church Missionary Society. Here we were most liberally and hospitably received. Above it is Fort Cumberland, a trading post of the Hudson's Bay Company. An upward voyage of a hundred and fifty miles, aided by a strong breeze, brought us to Fort à la Carne, another Hudson's Bay Company's post, where we found Stalker and our carts, and were joined by Pierre Garoupe, who had come across the country from Red River with a further supply of provisions and stores.



CHAPTER XVIII.

THE WINTER IN CAMP—OUR LOG-HOUSE AND HUTS—HUNTING
AND FISHING—BUFFALO STALKING—SUPPER AND A DANCE, AND
SUPPER AGAIN—HOW WE FARED IN CAMP—INDIAN STALKING
—WINTER PASTIME.

We found that although the weather was still very warm in the day-time, that the comparatively short summer of those regions was already too far advanced to allow of our pushing our way across the Rocky Mountains in the present wild state of the country ; a feat, however, which my friend Paul Kane performed some years ago ; but then boats were in waiting on the upper branch of the Columbia to convey him and his party to the south. We therefore agreed to employ ourselves in

hunting, and in preparing our winter quarters till it was time to go into them. As I have already described a summer buffalo-hunt, I will pass over those we at this time engaged in, and proceed to an account of our life in the winter.

Our canoes and such articles as we no longer required we exchanged for horses—such as were likely to prove of value to us in our onward journey in the spring. We had selected a beautiful spot near a lake and in the neighbourhood of a tribe of peaceably-disposed Indians, for the erection of our residence, about fifty miles from the forts; and we now set out for it, with our carts, horses, stores, and cattle in the true patriarchal style, only the women and children were fortunately wanting.

Having reached our location we pitched our tents, and having unpacked such provisions and goods as we required for our immediate use, placed the carts together, and covered the whole with tarpaulins. Our horses we turned out, as they would be able to exist through the whole winter, sheltered by the woods, and feeding on the rich grass which they could get at by digging with their noses under the snow. Our first business was then to cut down the trees necessary for the erection of our abodes. We all took axes in our hands, and in the course of a couple of days had trees enough felled for our purpose. There they lay around in all directions, but it puzzled Trevor and Peter not a little to say how they were to be made to answer the purpose of sheltering us during a winter of almost arctic severity. John Stalker was the chief builder, and I was architect; that is to say, I designed the plan of the buildings, and he directed the way in which they were to be put up, while the rest of the party lopped

off the branches and dragged the logs up to the spot. I had studied the way to construct a log-house while recovering from the wounds I received in our skirmish with the Comanches, and now I found an opportunity of turning my knowledge to account. The chief residence was to be oblong; so we cut two long and two short trunks, making deep scores at each end that they might fit into each other. Above these were placed others also scored at the ends, till four thick walls had been erected about seven feet high, without a roof and without doors and windows. Trevor looked at it with astonishment, and Peter walked round and round it till, stopping short near the builder, he remarked—

“Well, Master Stalker, that’s a rum house! I’ll be bold to ask, are we to be shut up all winter, so that we don’t want a door to go in and out at? And is it so dark that we don’t want a window to see out of?”

“Wait a bit, and you’ll see what we’ll do, lad,” answered Stalker, laughing. “Light enough, day and night, when the snow’s on the ground; and you’ll be as much out of doors as in doors when the sky’s clear.”

Peter waited and wondered, for Stalker insisted on getting up all the walls of the huts before proceeding to other portions of the work.

Besides ours, in which were to be deposited the stores for greater safety, there were to be two of smaller size for the men. The walls, when only thus far completed, looked in no way fitted to keep out the cold, as we could see through the interstices on every side. “Wait a bit,” was Stalker’s remark. “Now, lads, some on you go and dig the stiffest clay you can find, and others chop up some grass.” This order was speedily obeyed, and, with a mixture formed of the

two, every cranny was completely stopped up; and in the inside the walls were made so perfectly smooth that the logs were almost concealed. "There!" exclaimed Stalker, as he surveyed his work; "I doubt if Jack Frost, though he is pretty sharp in these parts, will ever get through that." With their hatchets, he and two of the other men literally chopped out a doorway and a window in each hut. The doors were formed from some boards taken from the carts, and the windows with sheets of parchment nailed tightly over the aperture, so that they served the double purpose of drums and windows. As yet there were no roofs; but the men had been set to work to cut a number of tall, thin young pine-trees, which served as rafters placed close together, while a quantity of marsh grass, over which was spread a heavy layer of clay, formed a thatch which no storm could remove.

We began to talk of putting up our bedsteads, and making ourselves comfortable inside our huts.

"Not much comfort you'll get by-and-by, gentlemen, if you was not to do something more than you have done," observed Stalker.

"What can that be?" asked Trevor.

"I'm sure I don't know," muttered Peter. "To my mind the houses are pretty comfortable for poor men, though not much for gentlemen like master and Mr. Trevor."

"I guess Jack Frost would pretty soon remind you when he comes," observed Stalker, with a grin.

"*Ma foi!*" exclaimed Pierre Garoupe. "Monsieur Jaque Frost make his way through de key-hole."

"Oh, how stupid—a fire-place!" I cried out.

"That's it," cried Stalker. "And now let's set about it."

I suggested that, instead of the ordinary clay of which fire-places are built, that ours should be constructed of stone of which there was no lack, in the shape of boulders, near the lake. These we collected in the carts, and by cementing them by mortar supported by a frame of wood outside, we formed a substantial fire-place and chimney suited for such a fire as we expected to require. By Stalker's advice we sunk the floor three feet deep, and piled the earth we dug up outside; thus adding much to the warmth of our abode. A trench was also dug outside, at some little distance, to take off any water which, during a casual thaw, might be inclined to run in. Then, to keep off the wind—the primary object—any grizzlies which might be wandering our way, or any Indians who might prove hostile, we surrounded our whole station with a strong palisade, so that it was almost as strong as one of the Company's Posts. Never sleep on the ground. To obviate that necessity we stuck some short posts into the ground, and on them formed a framework, over which we stretched some buffalo hides, and so got first-rate bedsteads. Trevor laughed at me for what he called my effeminacy, but I suggested that, after a hunting tramp of thirty or forty miles, we might not be sorry to turn into a comfortable bed. Our lads' labour was stacking all the wood we had cut for burning, and then storing our goods and provisions. We put off making the furniture for our huts till we should be kept in by bad weather. A further supply of firewood could also be procured at any time after the snow covered the ground. Writers of romances make their heroes and heroines wonderfully independent of food and rest; but we, being ordinary mortals, were aware that we could not exist in comfort without a good supply of provisions, and

Trevor and I therefore formed two parties of the men—one to remain in charge of the huts to fish, and to cure what they caught, besides trapping or shooting any animals; while the other was to accompany us in search of buffalo and any other game to be found.

Scarcely were our arrangements completed when the snow fell, and all nature assumed her wintry garb, not to be put off till the following spring.

Trevor and I, with John Stalker, Swiftfoot, and two other Indians, formed the hunting party. We first constructed four horse-sleighs to carry the flesh of the buffaloes we intended to kill, each dragged by a single horse. We were all mounted, also, on small, but active and hardy steeds, with our blankets, cloaks, tin-cups, pemmican, tea and sugar, and a few other articles, strapped to our saddles. We each had our rifles, axes, and hunting-knives, while an iron pot and a frying-pan were the only articles in our camp equipage. The snow, however thick, was no impediment to our horses in finding their food, for, without difficulty, they dug down through it with their noses till they reached the rich dry grass beneath, which seems, thus, in this apparently inhospitable region, to be preserved for their especial use. We found that horses, cattle, and pigs lived out through the winter without any charge being taken of them, except towards the end of spring, when an occasional thaw melts the surface of the snow, which, freezing again at night, forms so hard a crust that even their tough mouths cannot break through it.

We had no tents or covering beyond our cloaks and blankets. As night approached we camped near some copse of willow or birch, which would afford us wood for our fires—rarely even putting up a screen of birch-

bark which would shelter us from the icy blast. With a fire in the centre, as large as we could keep up, we lay in a circle, our feet towards it, and our bodies, like the spokes of a wheel, wrapped in our blankets, and our heads on our saddles. This was our most luxurious style of camping. At other times we were not nearly so well off, as I shall have to recount.

We had travelled about a hundred miles south of our station over a hilly, well-watered, and well-wooded country, which must, in summer, be highly picturesque, when Stalker announced, from the traces he had seen in the snow, that buffalo were near. We, therefore, immediately camped, but dared not light a fire for fear of frightening the animals, so we had to make a meal off dry pemmican and biscuit, washed down with rum and water—very sustaining food, at all events. In winter the buffalo must be stalked like deer, and cannot be ridden down as in summer, when the hard ground allows the horses to approach at full gallop. We consequently left our horses and rugs and cooking utensils—and, indeed, everything that would encumber us—in camp, under charge of the two Indians, and advanced on foot. We had to keep to leeward and to conceal ourselves behind any bush or inequality of ground we could find. “Too many cooks spoil the broth”—too many sportsmen do the same thing, or rather lose it altogether. We advanced cautiously enough, when once we got sight of the herd, for about two miles or more, each man taking up his station properly; but it had not been arranged who should fire first, or when each person should fire. There appeared directly before me a dozen or more fine bulls, rather too far for a certain aim. I was creeping on slowly and cautiously to get a better aim, when one of the party, in his eager-

ness, showed himself. We all said it was Peter, and scolded him accordingly, for off set the buffaloes at full gallop. Then we all let fly at the ends they exposed to us ; but not a shot took effect, and we soon afterwards met in the open space, where they had been, looking very foolish at each other. Peter bore his scolding without complaining, and our good humour was restored when Stalker assured us that we were sure to come up with the animals if we did not mind a good walk. Were we not bold hunters ? so of course we did not, and off we set.

We trudged on for many a long mile, when Stalker called a halt, and told us that we were again close to the herd, on their leaside, and that if we were cautious we should certainly bag some game. We had spent two or three hours gaining our present position ; evening was coming on, and if we did not kill some beasts now, we might miss them altogether. This made us more than usually anxious, as we crept on towards the unconscious animals, which kept busily cropping their afternoon meal. Now I saw one of them look up. Something had startled him. He communicated his fears to the rest. I was certain that in another moment they would be off. One of them, a fine bull, turned his shoulder towards me. The opportunity was not to be lost. I fired. The animal dashed on with the rest. I thought that I must have missed him ; but in a few seconds he stopped, rolled over, and his life-blood stained the pure snow. Three other shots were fired in quick succession, two of them followed by the fall of an animal ; at considerable distances, however, from each other. We pursued the rest, eager for more. We were hunting for the pot—indeed, our very existence might depend on what we should kill ; but, after a hard run of

a mile or more, the rest of the buffaloes broke from us and scampered off into the boundless prairie.

We now called a halt, and came to the conclusion that, if we did not hurry back, we should find but a Flemish account of the animals we had already killed, as that moment the howl of wolves struck on our ear, telling us that they had scented out the carcasses. Though they are much less ferocious than are those of Siberia and Russia, they have equally large appetites, and we knew that they would have no respect for our requirements of winter provender. We therefore divided parties. One half to remain by the animals last killed, while the others, that is to say, Peter and I, went back to the spot where I had killed the bull. We ran as fast as we could over the snow, and were only just in time to scare away a whole herd which was about to make an onslaught on our property; for so, in that region, the hunter considers every animal he kills, a point disputed only by the wolves, who believe themselves to possess an equal right to it.

We now began to reflect seriously how we were to pass the night. We had left our blankets and cloaks at our camp, and the thermometer, if we had possessed one, would have sunk below zero. Wood was scarce, and shelter of any sort there was none, as the snow was not deep enough to dig a hole in it, cold comfort even as that would have been. We espied a copse of arbovitæ, the close foliage covered pretty well with snow, at a distance, near a small pond, and from it we collected dry sticks sufficient only for a small fire. Having lighted it, we commenced skinning the buffalo, taking his hump and tongue for our supper, intending to broil the one and bake the other in a coat of clay. I

had a little tea in my pocket, and Peter had a tin mug, in which we managed to melt some snow and boil it sufficiently to infuse the fragrant herb; but, in spite of the warm beverage and hot meat, which we relished, we felt the cold bitterly. To keep off the chilling blast we scraped the snow up into a circular wall. I then bethought me of the buffalo skin, of which we soon denuded the beast, dragged it to our fire, and crept under it. How warm and cozy we found it! and all our fears for our comfort during the night vanished. Having made up the fire, with our rifles by our sides, we went to sleep. I was awake by a sensation of cold, and hearing Peter exclaim—

“Oh, sir, I wonder what has come over the buffalo skin?”

On sitting up I found that the lately soft and warm hide had formed a frozen arch over us, as hard as iron, and that our fire was nearly out. We could do nothing but spring to our feet, make up the fire, and then jump about before it to restore the circulation. Though this employment was satisfactory for a time we began, at length, to find it very irksome and fatiguing, and it seemed impossible to keep it up the whole night, yet I could think of no other way of escaping being frozen to death.

Peter proposed, as a variety, that we should eat some more beef and drink some more tea, a bright idea, to which I acceded; and when that midnight meal was over, we took to dancing again. We knew that Trevor and his party would be as badly off, and we only hoped that they would have thought of similar means of keeping body and soul together. Peter diversified the amusement by singing and playing all sorts of antics, while I contemplated the stars overhead; but instead

of rest we only became more and more fatigued, and I was truly glad when at length the wolves set up a hideous chorus, announcing the approach of dawn. A superstitious man, unaccustomed to the sound, might have supposed them to be a band of evil spirits, compelled at the return of the bright luminary of the day to revisit their abodes of darkness.

Having eaten so many suppers we had no appetite for breakfast, and instead of taking any we cut up the carcasses ready for the sleighs which Trevor was to send Swiftfoot to fetch. They arrived at length, when we found that our friends had passed the night exactly as we had done. The beef being sufficient only partly to fill the sleighs, Trevor and Stalker set off in search of more buffalo, while we followed slowly, intending to return to the camp in the evening. The result was that we killed four more bulls, and found ourselves, as night approached, far away from our camp. As, however, we had no desire to spend another night like the previous one, we set forth in search of it. We have heard of looking for a needle in a bundle of hay, and ours seemed a very similar undertaking; still both Stalker and Swiftfoot asserted that they could guide us to the camp by the stars; so on we travelled hour after hour, till they called a halt, and owned that we ought to be there, but that they were at fault as to the exact spot. Some thought that it was farther on, some to the right, and some to the left. The only point in which we were all agreed was that we were not at it, and that we must make up our minds to spend as disagreeable a night as the last.

There was a crescent moon, but that was about to set; by its faint light we discovered a small copse not far off. On the leeseide of it we lighted our fire, round

which we tramped for the remainder of the night, the trees not allowing us sufficient shelter to enable us to lie down without a great risk of being frozen to death. It was a weary and uninteresting employment after a hard day's work, and while I went round and round the fire I began to consider whether I might not have been more pleasantly occupied in shooting pheasants and partridges at home, with a good night's rest in a comfortable bed at the end of each day. "Begone such lazy thoughts," I, however, exclaimed; "I left home in search of adventures, and I am finding them."

When daylight came, it was, I confess, rather provoking to find that the camp was only three or four hundred yards off, where we had our supply of blankets and other creature comforts. As we had now our sleighs loaded to the utmost, and three buffaloes besides *en cache*, or hidden, that is from the wolves, we turned our faces homewards. The ground was hilly, and as the sun had still considerable power the surface of the snow had been melted, and when frozen again was exceedingly slippery. The consequence of this was that, one of the horses slipping on the side of a hill, the sleigh broke away and rolled over and over to the bottom. We ran down, expecting to see the horse killed or seriously injured, and the sleigh broken to pieces, but neither was the worse for the occurrence, and the horse being set on his legs, trotted on as bravely as before. We were not sorry to get back to our winter quarters, which appeared absolutely luxurious after the nights we had spent out in the snow without shelter. How we did sleep, and how we did eat! Hunter's fare, indeed, is not to be despised. We had for breakfast fried fish, buffalo tongues, tea, sugar, dampers, and *galettes*—cakes of simple water and flour,

baked under the ashes, and which are very light and nice. For dinner we had, say a dish of boiled buffalo hump, a smoked and boiled buffalo calf, whole, a mouffle or dry moose nose, fish, browned in buffalo marrow,



loons or other wild ducks, and goose, potatoes, turnips, and abundance of bread.

We had no necessity to dry the meat we had brought, as it would keep frozen through the winter. Near the forts the flesh of the buffaloes killed in winter is preserved through the summer in the following way :—An ice-pit is made, capable of containing the carcasses of six or seven hundred buffaloes. Ice, from a neighbouring river, is cut into square blocks of a uniform size with saws, like the blocks sent over to England from Wenham Lake. With these the floor and sides of the pit are lined, and cemented together with water thrown on them, which freezes hard. Each carcass, without being skinned, is divided into four quarters, and they are piled in layers in the pit till it is filled

up. It is then covered with a thick coating of straw, which is again protected from the sun and rain by a shed. In this way the meat is kept perfectly good through the summer, and is more tender and of better flavour than when fresh.

We entered into friendly relations with a tribe of Indians, who had taken up their winter quarters in a wood five or six miles off, and from them we learned many devices for catching game, which our own people were not accustomed to practise. We had won their hearts by supplying them with meat, and as they discovered that we could kill buffalo with our rifles with more certainty than they could with their old firearms, or bows and arrows, they were anxious to get us to accompany them in any hunting expedition, knowing that their share of game would be larger than any amount they could catch alone.

The three chief men were called by us, Eagle-eye, Quick-ear, and Wide-awake. Eagle-eye came to us one day to say that some buffalo had been seen very near the station, and invited us to go out and shoot them. The Indians undertook to shoot too, if we would go to a distance and kill the rest as they ran off. Our party was quickly ready, and off we set—the Indians carrying some skins, the object of which we did not understand. After walking eight or ten miles, Eagle-eye called a halt. Quick-ear produced the skin of a buffalo calf, and Wide-awake that of a wolf, into which they respectively got; while Eagle-eye, telling us to imitate him, led away to the right.

“There, you see, we make one big snake,” he observed, as we prepared to follow his footsteps. “The buffalo see us long way off; think we snake among grass.”

What the buffalo thought I do not know, but certainly they took no notice of us—indeed we were a long way off, and perhaps they were engaged in watching the proceedings of Quick-ear, who was representing the antics of an innocent little buffalo calf. Nearer and nearer the little calf they drew; now they stopped, rather doubtful; then they advanced a little and stopped again. Suddenly a wolf, represented by Wide-awake, appeared on the scene, and the calf bellowed piteously; the wolf sprang savagely on him; the kind-hearted buffaloes could stand it no longer, but rushed forward to rescue their young fellow-creature, when Quick-ear and Wide-awake, jumping up with their rifles, which had been lying by their sides, in their hands, let fly, and brought down two of them. The rest scampered off towards where we were posted, nor did they appear to notice us till four more of their number had fallen, when the survivors turned, and were soon out of reach of our rifles.

The Indians, on seeing the success of their stratagem, sprang forward, shouting and leaping with joy, and soon had the animals cut up and ready for transportation to their lodges and our huts. Our horse-sleighs soon after appeared, followed by theirs, dragged by dogs, and guided by their squaws. Before moving, a feast was held by our Red friends; the men eating first, and enjoying the tit bits, then the hard-worked women were fed, and lastly the dogs came in for their share. When the variety of ways employed to kill buffalo is remembered, it will not appear surprising that their numbers are rapidly decreasing.

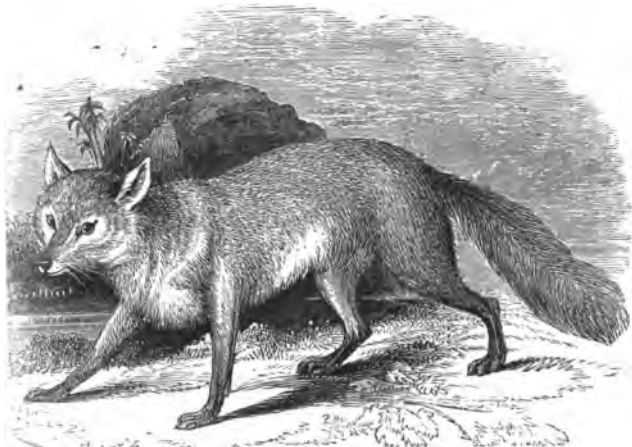
The winter seemed to pass far more speedily away than we could have expected, with a very limited supply of books, and with no society except such as our savage

visitors afforded us. The fact was, however, that we were never idle, though it must be confessed that we took a very large share of sleep, and ate large amounts of meat and fat, for the sake of generating heat in our system. Day after day we were out in the woods trapping, and soon became very expert trappers. We caught the fox, the wolverine, the pekan or fisher, marten, otter, and other animals, for the sake of their skins, and occasionally fell in with the loon and other wild fowl. Our equipment was very simple. Doubling up our blankets, and uniting the four corners, we formed a pack to contain our pemmican, frying-pan, tin kettle and cup, tea, sugar, and salt, pepper, garlic, and any other small luxury. We had also brought with us from Red River some steel traps; a rifle, ammunition, axe, knife, fire bag and lucifer matches, completed the equipment of each man. Indeed, these last should never be overlooked by those who have to traverse wild countries; a single tin box is easily stowed away handy, and will last a long while. We carried our blankets—as an Irish woman or a gipsy does her child and other worldly goods, at our backs, with a strap across the breast. Well secured from cold, with snow shoes on our feet, we sallied forth into the pathless forest, trusting to our faithful pocket-compass to find our way back again, or to the guidance of our Indians.

The plan was to set our traps as we went out, and to visit them on our return. The steel traps made to catch wolves are of necessity heavy and strong, so that we could only carry a few of them, and had therefore to make others on a more primitive plan. When the beaver was less scarce than now, the beaver-trap was the usual mode of taking the creature; but beavers

are now all but extinct, so we spared the few which got into the traps, and let them loose again. The steel traps are like our rat traps, but have no teeth, and require a strong man to set them. They are secured by a chain to a long stick laid on the ground, and are covered over with snow, pieces of meat being scattered about to tempt the animals to the neighbourhood. The wolf, as he goes prowling about, is nearly certain to get a foot into the trap. Off he goes with it, but is soon brought up by the chain and log, and they seldom had got far when we found them. The wooden trap is formed by driving a number of stakes, so as to form a palisade, in the shape of a half oval. The enclosure is large enough to allow an animal to push in half its body, but not to turn round. A heavy log is supported by a perpendicular stick, with another horizontal, having the bait at the end of it, much as the brick is in a boy's bird-trap at home. The animal, if he touches the bait—a piece of tough meat or a bird—brings the log down on his shoulder and is crushed to death. We could, after a time, construct thirty or forty of these in a morning, so there was ample interest and excitement in ascertaining, as we walked back, whether our traps had caught anything. Our greatest enemy was the glutton, or wolverine, or as Garoupe called him, the *carcajou*. He is rather larger than an English fox, with a shaggy coat and very broad feet, armed with sharp claws. He is the most cunning and inquisitive of animals. Nothing escapes his notice as he ranges his native wilds, and he can climb a tree or dig a hole with his claws. He used to take the baits out of our traps by digging through the back, and so getting at it. He was not to be caught by poison, and he could select pieces without it, and bite in two those he suspected

contained any. Now and then, though, he is caught by poison, but only when very severely pressed by hunger. When he gets his foot in a steel trap he drags it off, though heavy enough to catch a wolf, and



instead of biting off the limb, as the mink and fox will do, he retires to some secluded spot and there endeavours to withdraw it, in which he often succeeds.

Hunting and trapping in winter, though very interesting and exciting, are not to be followed without considerable hardships. Often the cold was so intense that though sitting close to a blazing fire, and thickly clothed, it was impossible to keep warm. Our usual dress was three flannel shirts, one of duffel, and another of leather, over all; fur caps, protecting our ears and necks, mittens of moose-skin without fingers, easily pulled off, and secured by a string round the neck, and large moccasins over numerous pairs of socks.



CHAPTER XIX.

ACROSS THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS—THE SASKATCHEWAN—A CORACLE,
AND HOW TO MAKE IT—FORT EDMONTON—ENCOUNTER WITH A
GRIZZLY—A BANQUET IN THE WOOD—WE ARE JOINED BY A
PARTY OF SEVEN.

THE winter at length came to an end. The snow began rapidly to disappear, and we commenced preparations for our journey across the Rocky Mountains and British Columbia to Vancouver's Island. We busied ourselves in getting our carts and stores in order, while Stalker and Garoupe went out in search of the horses, which we knew had not strayed far. The following day they appeared, driving the whole mob before them, every animal looking as fat as if stalled, and in far better condition for travelling. Our men we believed were stanch and true. Our party consisted of Stalker, Garoupe, Swiftfoot, the Indian, and Quick-ear, who professed to know the whole country down to the mouth of the Frazer. Thus we had four natives and three Englishmen—Trevor, myself, and Peter—with our faithful four-footed follower, Ready: a number not so great as to provoke attack, yet sufficient to resist wanton aggression.

On the last day of March we were up before day-

break, took our last meal in our winter abode, packed our carts, and then—carefully closing up the doorways and windows, so as to preserve the buildings for the use of future travellers who might have to spend a winter in that region—with a feeling of regret bade farewell to the spot, knowing the improbability that we should ever again revisit it.

We had four carts, and each of us was mounted, having a spare horse apiece, so that we formed no inconsiderable a cavalcade. We pushed on as fast as the nature of the ground—wet from the melting snow—would allow till we came to the north bank of the Saskatchewan River. For two days we continued along it till it became necessary to cross for the sake of the more beaten track on the opposite bank. How was this to be accomplished? The water was far too cold to make swimming pleasant. I bethought me of the ancient British water conveyances, still in use in Wales. Having seen an abundant supply of dry reeds and rushes in a creek a little way off, we unloaded a cart, and sent the men to bring it full of them. Meantime, I employed myself in making a framework of green willows, and in well greasing a buffalo hide, so as to prevent the water getting through it. While I worked at the boat, Trevor manufactured a pair of paddles and a third for steering. By the time the cart returned, we had done so much that all that remained was to make the reeds and rushes up into bundles and to fasten them outside the framework on which I had stretched the buffalo skin.

In this somewhat frail though buoyant canoe, resembling somewhat a Welsh coracle, we conveyed all our goods across the river, though with a very moderate freight; it would only carry two people at a time.

The carts, which were entirely of wood, floated easily, and were towed across at the tails of the horses. All the party having got safe across, we again loaded and



pushed on for another ten miles over a well-beaten track till we camped for the night. The difficulties we encountered in travelling across the country were wonderfully few, and Trevor was constantly exclaiming—

“What a pity people at home don’t know of this! A few thousand hardy fellows like us, who can stand cold and heat, would soon change the face of the country, and make comfortable houses for themselves into the bargain.”

We stopped for two days at Edmonton, a large trading port or fort of the Hudson's Bay Company. It stands on high ground above the Saskatchewan, is formed of rough palisades, with flanking towers, sufficiently strong to resist an attack of Indians, and contains a blacksmith's forge and carpenter's shop, and some thirty families; while attached to it is a large body of hunters, employed in collecting furs for the Company, or in killing buffalo for food. Round the fort, wheat, potatoes, and vegetables of all sorts, are produced in abundance; indeed, the whole of the Saskatchewan district through which we passed is capable of supporting a dense population. I may state also, once for all, that the scenery, though not grand, is highly picturesque and beautiful, with wooded slopes, green meadows, sunny uplands, lakes, streams, groves, and distant hills, yearning for an industrious population to give it life, and to fulfil the object of the beneficent Creator who formed it thus.

At Edmonton we exchanged our carts for packs and pack horses, as with those alone could we hope to pass over the Rocky Mountains, or, at all events, traverse the region on the other side of them. We did not, however, travel faster, as the delay, when we had to cross rivers, in building rafts to ferry over our goods, was greater.

There was no great probability of our having to encounter any formidable enemies during our journey. We might, however, meet with Indians who would perhaps set envious eyes on our horses, or with grizzlies, which would dispute our progress, or wish to appropriate our provisions. Of course, we should have rivers to cross, floods from melting snow to encounter, thunderstorms, or prairie fires, maybe; perhaps even avalanches and

whirlwinds to battle with ; or, at least, to reckon upon overturns, breakdowns, and similar incidents, to which all exploring parties are liable. Indeed, I will not attempt to describe how we had to cross and recross some of the rivers, or to follow through the prairie a track which only the practised eye of an Indian could distinguish.

We had been travelling along the banks of a wide stream, which, with the breaking up of the ice, had become too rapid to be navigable for our canoes, and had reached a small lake, on the shore of which we resolved to camp before continuing our ascent. While supper was preparing, I took my gun and strolled on by the shore of the lake, with Ready, hoping to get a shot at some wild fowl, or, if in luck, perhaps at a prong buck, a big horn, as the sheep of the mountains are called, or at a Rocky Mountain goat—all three most difficult to hunt. The scenery was magnificent—high mountain ranges rose on either hand, some directly out of the lake, with snow-capped peaks above standing out against the deep-blue sky, their images reflected in the mirror-like water. I strolled on ; now glancing at the lake, now at the height nearest hand, where I fancied that I saw a fine mountain goat feeding. This was the first I had seen. It is the most wild, solitary, and unsocial of all animals, and seldom found but at the summit of the Rocky Mountains. All at once I was startled by the rustling of leaves near me, and wishing to ascertain what animal was there, I climbed to the top of the fallen trunk of a tree which lay in my path. Bending aside the branch of a tree before me, I saw—what I would rather not have seen so close at hand—a huge brown creature, a monster grizzly, busily employed in tearing open the rotten

trunk of a tree for the sake of the insects therein contained. I retreated, hoping that I had not disturbed the gentleman in his entomological researches. I was mistaken, however, for as the bough sprang back to its former position, he looked up, and before I could jump down, his quick eye had discerned me.

To escape by flight was impossible. Had I attempted to run over the rough ground he would have overtaken me, and as certainly squeezed the life out of my body ; so I stood still where I was, threw up my arms, and prepared to bring my rifle down to my shoulder to fire. I had heard that the action I performed had usually the effect of making a grizzly bear stop and stand up on his hind legs, or rather sit down with his fore paws up. This, to my infinite satisfaction, my friend did ; but he curled his lips, showing his teeth, and opening his huge mouth in a most unpleasant manner. My safety depended on my putting a bullet into a vital part. Should I only wound him, I knew that he would be upon me in a moment. It is not surprising that I hesitated. While I did so I heard a loud rustling among the branches behind him, and from out of the brushwood two other rather smaller bears appeared, squatting down by the side of their big companion, and looking at me savagely.

Had there been only two of them I might, I thought, possibly kill one with one barrel, and one with the other ; but how could I hope to dispose of three ? Even should I shoot two, the survivor would certainly pursue and attack me. All this time, Ready, who had jumped upon the log, stood, like a well-trained dog, by my side. There was not a particle of fear in him. A word from me would have made him attack the bears, and proved his certain destruction. There they all three

sat looking at me and grinning, and with Ready alongside I stood looking at them, thinking how I could best turn them into meat fit to be eaten. At last I determined to risk a shot, or rather two shots. I levelled my rifle. The hammer came down as I pulled the trigger, but there was no report. The cap split and missed fire. The bears growled more fiercely than ever, and I thought were about to make a rush on me. I dared not attempt to fire the second barrel; for should that go off, I should have been entirely unarmed. I therefore gently lowered my rifle till I could put on a new cap. The bears did not like the movement, and showed signs of advancing. I was afraid that Ready would have flown at them. It would have been all up with him and me had he done so. I stood stock still for a moment; so did the bears. Then I rapidly capped my rifle—fired first at the big fellow, with a steady aim, and then at one of his companions, and not stopping an instant to ascertain what effect my shots had taken, leaped down off the log, and ran off as fast as my legs would carry me, calling Ready to follow, loading my gun as I went. A loud growl told me that I was pursued, and I then felt that I had done a very foolish thing in firing, and that I should be fortunate if I escaped with life and limb. Had it not been for the tree, my escape would have been impossible.

The growls grew louder and fiercer. They were answered by a sharp bark. I turned my head. Two bears were following me—the large fellow and a smaller one. From the neck of the first the blood was trickling down. My faithful Ready, seeing my danger, was trying to draw off their attention from me. He succeeded sufficiently, at the great risk of his life, to enable me to load one barrel of my rifle. “Which of the two

shall I shoot?" I asked myself. I selected the one already wounded. I fired. He stopped a second, and then came on more savagely than ever. He was close upon me—the other being only a little way behind. I must kill the big one or be destroyed. I stopped, faced him boldly—as dangers should always be faced—and fired. Not another inch did he advance, but immediately rolled over—shot through the heart. Still his companion remained unhurt. He continued to advance towards me, growling fiercely. In vain did Ready, with wonderful activity, endeavour to distract his attention. Had I attempted to fly he would have been on me in a moment. My only chance was standing still and keeping him at bay. I threw up my arms as before—made as if I would run at him—though I felt much more inclined to leap backwards—and shouted at the top of my voice, hoping to frighten him, but all to no purpose. On he came, and in another instant I should have been made into mincemeat, or into a perfect hash, at all events, when, just as the beast, having sent Ready flying on one side, was about to seize me in his terrible paws, a bullet whistled past my ear, the powder almost singeing my whiskers, and over he went, shot through the heart. I was safe, but so sensible was I of the danger I had incurred, that for a time I felt my knees trembling under me. On recovering myself I looked round to see who was my deliverer.

About a dozen yards behind me stood Swiftfoot, leaning quietly on his rifle, with true Indian calmness, as if he had been there for the last few hours, his countenance expressive of utter indifference to what had occurred. He knew the danger I might incur should my path be crossed by bear or panther, and had most considerately followed in my wake, keeping

just within earshot without letting me know, and had heard my loud shouting at the grizzly. No words were spoken by either of us at the moment. A shake of the hand was all that passed; but it expressed far more than words could then have done. It took some little time to still my nerves, and with excellent tact Swiftfoot set to work to cut up the game which had thus fallen to our share, going about it as if nothing had happened out of the common, in a business-like manner carefully selecting all that was to be carried into camp. Ready seemed to think the operation excellent fun; indeed, he was able practically to enjoy it till I was compelled to call him off from his banquet for fear that he would over-eat himself. All this time I kept eyeing the neighbouring thicket lest the third bear might come to look for his companions and catch us engaged in a manner which he might think fit to resent. Having cut up the two bears, Swiftfoot made a number of thongs out of their skins, and with these he slung as much of the bears' flesh as he could carry over his shoulders. I followed his example, and the remainder we hung up in a tree, that we believed we could again easily find when we returned to fetch it.

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“If we don't make haste there'll be little else but the bones left for us to suck,” observed Swiftfoot. “The eagles and vultures will soon scent it out, not to speak of those cunning little critters the wolverines.”

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We had a most sumptuous supper, washed down by copious draughts of tea, added to which—

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The next day we met a party of seven men, well armed, who had wintered at the foot of the Rocky Mountains, some distance to the south, and were now on their way to the Saskatchewan to prospect for gold, of which they had heard there was an abundance. They had been very successful in their buffalo hunting, and had also caught a large supply of fish before the stream froze over, so that they were all in good condition and high spirits. They camped with us, and as we all sat round our fire at night, and song, tale, and anecdote succeeded each other, amid hearty shouts of laughter, no one would have supposed that tea was the strongest beverage in which we were indulging, and that we all had passed through and were about to plunge again into perils and hardships of no ordinary kind.



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AND WHAT FOLLOWED—ALL SAFE AT LAST.

WE were seated round the fire discussing a hearty
supper, of which bears' flesh formed a substantial part,
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gold-digger, one of our new friends, who was seated a little way back on account of the heat, had got on the point of his knife a huge slice, which he was eating with evident enjoyment, though in no very refined fashion. Suddenly, from behind a neighbouring tree, a huge monster, his size increased threefold in the gloom, darted out towards us.

"*Un ours !* a grizzly—a bear! a bear!" shouted out our party, one after the other; but before any of us could rise to our feet the creature, seizing poor Mr. Gaby round the waist, began to waddle off with him at great speed.

He had got, indeed, nearly fifty yards before we well knew what had happened: neither, indeed, did Habakkuk himself, very clearly. He kept shouting out—

"Let me go, you brute!—let me go, I say, or I'll——" The bear put a stop to any further remark, and he could only shriek out "Oh! oh! oh! Shoo—shoo—shoot!"

Had anybody acted on his request he would inevitably have been hit, as the bear kept him between himself and our rifles. Trevor actually lifted his gun with the intention of firing, but I drew back his arm.

"Our best chance of saving the poor fellow is to rush in and stab the bear," I said.

Fortunately, bruin's immediate object was to get hold of the luscious steak Gaby had been eating. Putting him down, therefore, and keeping him pinned to the ground with his hind feet, the bear seized the steak and began greedily to devour it. Poor Habakkuk thought this would be a good opportunity to make his escape. No sooner, however, did he begin to move than bruin stopped eating, and gave him a look which clearly meant "You'd better not try that again." Gaby remained perfectly quiet for a minute, and Stalker,

The carts, which were entirely of wood, floated easily, and were towed across at the tails of the horses. All the party having got safe across, we again loaded and



pushed on for another ten miles over a well-beaten track till we camped for the night. The difficulties we encountered in travelling across the country were wonderfully few, and Trevor was constantly exclaiming—

“What a pity people at home don’t know of this! A few thousand hardy fellows like us, who can stand cold and heat, would soon change the face of the country, and make comfortable houses for themselves into the bargain.”

We stopped for two days at Edmonton, a large trading port or fort of the Hudson's Bay Company. It stands on high ground above the Saskatchewan, is formed of rough palisades, with flanking towers, sufficiently strong to resist an attack of Indians, and contains a blacksmith's forge and carpenter's shop, and some thirty families; while attached to it is a large body of hunters, employed in collecting furs for the Company, or in killing buffalo for food. Round the fort, wheat, potatoes, and vegetables of all sorts, are produced in abundance; indeed, the whole of the Saskatchewan district through which we passed is capable of supporting a dense population. I may state also, once for all, that the scenery, though not grand, is highly picturesque and beautiful, with wooded slopes, green meadows, sunny uplands, lakes, streams, groves, and distant hills, yearning for an industrious population to give it life, and to fulfil the object of the beneficent Creator who formed it thus.

At Edmonton we exchanged our carts for packs and pack horses, as with those alone could we hope to pass over the Rocky Mountains, or, at all events, traverse the region on the other side of them. We did not, however, travel faster, as the delay, when we had to cross rivers, in building rafts to ferry over our goods, was greater.

There was no great probability of our having to encounter any formidable enemies during our journey. We might, however, meet with Indians who would perhaps set envious eyes on our horses, or with grizzlies, which would dispute our progress, or wish to appropriate our provisions. Of course, we should have rivers to cross, floods from melting snow to encounter, thunderstorms, or prairie fires, maybe; perhaps even avalanches and

whirlwinds to battle with ; or, at least, to reckon upon overturns, breakdowns, and similar incidents, to which all exploring parties are liable. Indeed, I will not attempt to describe how we had to cross and recross some of the rivers, or to follow through the prairie a track which only the practised eye of an Indian could distinguish.

We had been travelling along the banks of a wide stream, which, with the breaking up of the ice, had become too rapid to be navigable for our canoes, and had reached a small lake, on the shore of which we resolved to camp before continuing our ascent. While supper was preparing, I took my gun and strolled on by the shore of the lake, with Ready, hoping to get a shot at some wild fowl, or, if in luck, perhaps at a prong buck, a big horn, as the sheep of the mountains are called, or at a Rocky Mountain goat—all three most difficult to hunt. The scenery was magnificent—high mountain ranges rose on either hand, some directly out of the lake, with snow-capped peaks above standing out against the deep-blue sky, their images reflected in the mirror-like water. I strolled on ; now glancing at the lake, now at the height nearest hand, where I fancied that I saw a fine mountain goat feeding. This was the first I had seen. It is the most wild, solitary, and unsocial of all animals, and seldom found but at the summit of the Rocky Mountains. All at once I was startled by the rustling of leaves near me, and wishing to ascertain what animal was there, I climbed to the top of the fallen trunk of a tree which lay in my path. Bending aside the branch of a tree before me, I saw—what I would rather not have seen so close at hand—a huge brown creature, a monster grizzly, busily employed in tearing open the rotten

trunk of a tree for the sake of the insects therein contained. I retreated, hoping that I had not disturbed the gentleman in his entomological researches. I was mistaken, however, for as the bough sprang back to its former position, he looked up, and before I could jump down, his quick eye had discerned me.

To escape by flight was impossible. Had I attempted to run over the rough ground he would have overtaken me, and as certainly squeezed the life out of my body ; so I stood still where I was, threw up my arms, and prepared to bring my rifle down to my shoulder to fire. I had heard that the action I performed had usually the effect of making a grizzly bear stop and stand up on his hind legs, or rather sit down with his fore paws up. This, to my infinite satisfaction, my friend did ; but he curled his lips, showing his teeth, and opening his huge mouth in a most unpleasant manner. My safety depended on my putting a bullet into a vital part. Should I only wound him, I knew that he would be upon me in a moment. It is not surprising that I hesitated. While I did so I heard a loud rustling among the branches behind him, and from out of the brushwood two other rather smaller bears appeared, squatting down by the side of their big companion, and looking at me savagely.

Had there been only two of them I might, I thought, possibly kill one with one barrel, and one with the other ; but how could I hope to dispose of three ? Even should I shoot two, the survivor would certainly pursue and attack me. All this time, Ready, who had jumped upon the log, stood, like a well-trained dog, by my side. There was not a particle of fear in him. A word from me would have made him attack the bears, and proved his certain destruction. There they all three

sat looking at me and grinning, and with Ready alongside I stood looking at them, thinking how I could best turn them into meat fit to be eaten. At last I determined to risk a shot, or rather two shots. I levelled my rifle. The hammer came down as I pulled the trigger, but there was no report. The cap split and missed fire. The bears growled more fiercely than ever, and I thought were about to make a rush on me. I dared not attempt to fire the second barrel; for should that go off, I should have been entirely unarmed. I therefore gently lowered my rifle till I could put on a new cap. The bears did not like the movement, and showed signs of advancing. I was afraid that Ready would have flown at them. It would have been all up with him and me had he done so. I stood stock still for a moment; so did the bears. Then I rapidly capped my rifle—fired first at the big fellow, with a steady aim, and then at one of his companions, and not stopping an instant to ascertain what effect my shots had taken, leaped down off the log, and ran off as fast as my legs would carry me, calling Ready to follow, loading my gun as I went. A loud growl told me that I was pursued, and I then felt that I had done a very foolish thing in firing, and that I should be fortunate if I escaped with life and limb. Had it not been for the tree, my escape would have been impossible.

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Garoupe, and the Indians began moving round to either side that they might have a better chance of hitting the bear without killing the man. Trevor and I stood ready to fire if we had an opportunity. Again, Habakkuk thought that he could do the bear, and, springing up, made a leap forward; but bruin, who had just finished his steak, was too quick for him, and seizing him round the waist, gave him a most fearful hug. Poor Gaby's features exhibited his very natural terror and the agony he was enduring. Uttering horrible shrieks, he shouted out—

“Fire! fire, friends! fire! Don't mind who you hit so that you kill this infernal brute.”

I felt that something must be done to prevent such another hug, or poor Gaby would scarcely have a chance of escape with life; so, running up, I got within a few yards of the bear's head, when, stopping, I took a steady aim and fired. As the monster rolled over on his back, poor Gaby fell forward in the opposite direction. While the rest of the party quickly despatched the bear I lifted up Habakkuk, whom I expected to find dead. However, to my great satisfaction, he slowly opened his eyes, and when he discovered that it was not the bear but I who was standing over him, and that bruin was killed, he drew a deep breath, as if to get back the wind which had been squeezed out of his body, and sat upright.

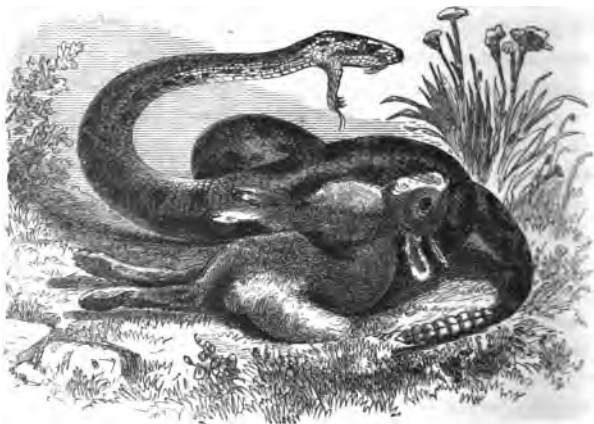
“Well, I guess that's more than I ever went through afore, or ever wish to go through again,” he exclaimed. “It was mighty unpleasant—that it was!”

Besides this, he said very little on the subject. As to remarking that I had shot the bear and saved his life, that never entered his head. On examining the bear we found that he was wretchedly thin—all skin and bone. This was curious, as the bears we killed in the after-

noon were tolerably fat. Stalker was of opinion that he had either come from a distance, and had no connection with them, or that he was an outcast bear—conquered by the gentlemen, perhaps, whom we were eating.

The night passed off without any further adventure. During the first part of it we cut up the bears' flesh into thin strips to dry in the sun, that we might save our pemmican and more portable food as much as possible; and then we went to sleep with our feet to the fire, for the nights were still cold—one of the party keeping watch at a time. The next day we moved forward, but the ground was hard and rough, and our way lay across forests and over fallen trees, up rocky hills and across swampy valleys, whilst the heat of the sun during the day was very oppressive. So we encamped, rather earlier than usual, in a somewhat rocky place. After we had arranged our camp, and as Trevor and I were starting with our guns to kill a deer for supper, and while the rest of the men were variously occupied, as I passed Mr. Gaby, who was fast asleep, what was my horror to see a large rattlesnake creeping slowly from his side to his bosom! I was on the point of shouting out to awaken him, but Stalker, who had come up, begged me to remain quiet, and that perhaps the snake would merely crawl over the man's body and move away. The serpent, however, had no intention of doing any such thing, but quietly coiled itself under the Yankee's left shoulder. Had he moved in his sleep the creature would, in a moment, have stung him in the neck, and no human power could have saved his life. We looked on with horror, not knowing what course to pursue. Immediately, however, that Garoupe saw the state of the case he hurried off to the nearest thicket, and returning

with a long thin stick, told Stalker and Swiftfoot to go in front and draw the attention of the snake to themselves. As soon as the creature saw the men in front it raised its head, darted out its forked tongue and shook its rattles, showing that it was highly irritated.



Habakkuk's danger was now greatly increased, for should the noise close to his ear awaken him, a movement of his arm might make the snake bite him. While all of us were in a state of dread for poor Gaby, Garoupe got behind the creature with his long stick, and, suddenly placing it under the coiled reptile, by a dexterous movement sent it flying a dozen paces off. A shout of satisfaction burst from our lips at Gaby's safety. The sound awoke him, and little dreaming of the fearful danger he had escaped, he looked up, and merely said—
“Well, now! What's it all about? Do I look so very funny?”

He was serious enough, however, when Garoupe,

who had gone after the snake and killed it with his stick, returned and exhibited it to him.

On searching about we found a number of the reptiles in holes in the rocks and under big stones. We armed ourselves with sticks and quickly despatched them. This we had no difficulty in doing, as they can only spring their own length, and a smart blow on the tail at once disables them. The first killed was three feet three inches long, and nine years old, which we knew by the number of rattles in his tail. At supper, off game which Trevor and I had shot, Gaby told us that he once formed one of a party in Vermont which went out rattlesnake hunting, and that they found a vast number of rattlesnakes in holes with their tails sticking out; that they pulled them out by their tails, and flung them far on one side, where they quickly were despatched. It is quite as well not to repeat how many hundreds he declared were killed in the course of the hunt, for Mr. Gaby was not wanting in that quality so conspicuous in others of his countrymen, of speaking without much regard to exactness—which I candidly believe to be an infirmity, rather than a desire to exaggerate, which is common enough amongst the uneducated classes all over the world.

The Rocky Mountains consist of a lofty range extending from the north of the continent to its southern end, at a distance from the Pacific of from fifty to three hundred miles. The summits of the range are covered with perpetual snow, and, till lately, the generally received notion was that they formed an almost impassable barrier between the Pacific and the interior. To the east the country is mostly level and easily travelled over, especially the fertile belt along which we had come; while to the west, that is, between

the range and the Pacific, it is mountainous in the extreme, as is also the case in British Columbia, across which we were now to force our way. There are, however, numerous passes through which roads can be cut out without much difficulty. The surveyors, indeed, reported one of the passes to require only the trees to be cut down to allow waggons, if not a coach and four, to be driven through it. It is called the Vermilion Pass.

We did not take it, because the distance through a mountainous and lake region is much greater than the pass we selected further to the north. When, however, the settlers in British Columbia cut a road across parts of the country, and place steamers on certain lakes and rivers, there will be no difficulties to prevent ordinary travellers from passing from Lake Superior, by the way of the Red River, through the Fertile Belt and over the Rocky Mountains, to New Westminster, the capital of the province.

We had been journeying on through forests, and should scarcely have noticed the ascent we were making, had it not been for the increased rapidity of the streams in our course flowing to the east, when reaching a small lake we found that the water which flowed from it ran to the westward, and that we were on what is called the watershed, or highest part of the pass. Still, as we looked westward, we had range beyond range of rocky mountains, the peaks of many covered with snow. This region was a part of British Columbia, but it must be remembered that between these mountains were valleys, and rivers, and lakes, and streams, and that it was by the side of these streams and lakes we expected to make our way across the country. I had thought, when I first planned the expedition, that all we had to do was to climb up the Rocky Mountains,

and then to descend into well-watered plains. We found in reality that our chief difficulties had only now begun. We had certainly mountains to descend, but then we had also others to ascend; we had rivers to cross and recross, either by wading or on rafts, which we had to construct; trees to cut down, and brushwood to clear away; recumbent trees to climb over, and rotten trees to force our way through. Still people had done the same thing before, and Stalker and Swiftfoot asserted that we could do it, and were ready to stake their credit on the success of the undertaking.

We now formed fresh arrangements for crossing the country. Swiftfoot and Quick-ear were to devote themselves to hunting, to supply us with food. Stalker and Garoupe were to clear the way with their axes, while Trevor, Peter, and I conducted the horses. From the summit of a high mountain we reached, Quick-ear pointed out the hills (he said) of Cariboo, with the Frazer flowing away towards them. That now far-famed river has its sources in the region in which we then were. It runs nearly north-west for a hundred and fifty miles or more, and then, sweeping round the Cariboo region, flows due south for several hundred miles, down to Port Hope, and then on west to New Westminster and the sea, there being, however, some picturesquely beautiful, but practically ugly rapids, in its course. We made good our necessary westing, but after cutting our way to the banks of the Frazer we found that the country was almost impracticable towards Cariboo, and that the river swept so far round to the north of it that we should have to make a very long voyage if we went that way. We therefore turned round, with our faces to the southward, determined to make our way down the Thompson River to

Port Kamloops, a trading post of the Hudson's Bay Company, with which, and the town of Lytton, there was, we knew, a constant communication. High snowy peaks appeared more or less near on every side, broken hills, and rounded hills, and rocks, and precipices, and dense forests, wherever trees could find soil for their roots. The crossing streams and small lakes caused us considerable difficulty, but it was not so great as that we encountered when we had to cut our way, foot by foot, through the forest. The rivers our horses could swim across with ease, though they had some difficulty in getting up the banks. Our baggage was ferried over on rafts, for forming which we had plenty of materials at hand. Gaby was no despicable backwoodsman, and with his sharp axe he gave us efficient help in felling trees, while he was an adept also in fastening them together. As we advanced, however, our difficulties increased, and game became scarce. We agreed to separate for a few days. Trevor was to take Swiftfoot and to ascertain if any navigable stream ran towards Lake Quesnelle, as we believed that if we could once reach its waters we could easily get to Cariboo. Stalker and Quick-ear were to continue to hunt, and to keep up a communication between us, while Gaby and I, accompanied by Peter and Ready, were to make our way to the head waters of the Thompson. A camp was to be formed in some eligible position, where pasture for the horses could be found, and here we were to leave our heavier goods and provisions, to be brought on in the direction which might prove most promising.

After a hurried breakfast, at day-break we started on our respective courses. My party of three and the dog had not got far when we came to a broad stream,

which it was necessary to cross. We quickly made a small raft, on which two persons could sit with a portion of our goods; we had a long line secured to it, so that the raft could be dragged backwards and forwards, while the horses swam across. Gaby and I crossed first, and I found the water deeper than I expected. Not without some difficulty did we reach the opposite bank in time to help up the horses, and to keep them together till their cargoes were again ready for them. Peter then drew back the raft, and embarked on it with the remainder of our provisions. He poled on the raft tolerably well till he got into the middle of the stream, when, by some means, the lad's foot slipped, and overboard he went, letting go his pole. He was but a poor swimmer, and his destruction seemed certain, unless I could manage to get him out. I was throwing off my clothes to plunge in to his rescue, when I saw that the raft had swung round and that he had happily caught hold of it. I did not, however, at first observe that the rope had snapped, or got loose from its fastening, and that the raft was drifting rapidly down the stream. After a while he got up and seated himself composedly on it, wondering apparently what next would happen. It took a good deal to put him out. As soon as I discovered that the raft was really adrift, I ran along the bank, hoping that the current would send it in either on one side or the other, but instead of that it kept steadily in the middle, and as I looked ahead, I saw that precipitous rocks formed the banks, over which it would not be possible to scramble. Peter, too, turned round, and now, for the first time it seemed, comprehended his danger. He held out his hands imploringly towards me, crying out, "Oh, sir, oh, sir!—pray save me, save me!" The

water was icy cold, from the rapidly melting snow, and I had some reasonable dread of cramp. Still I was about to run every risk to save the poor lad, when I bethought me that Ready, who had crossed with me, would lend his aid. I told Peter to call him, and beckoned the dog to go towards the raft. After a little hesitation, and a few sharp barks, as if he was not quite certain what I wanted him to do, he plunged boldly in and swam towards the raft.

Peter had meantime hauled in the slack of the rope, and coiled it neatly down on the raft. Ready swam quickly up to the raft. He seemed clearly to comprehend the object of his enterprise, and opening his mouth to receive the end of the rope, which Peter put into it, swam triumphantly back towards the shore. I gave him an approving pat, as he landed, and taking the rope, with Gaby's aid, I began to haul the raft towards the land. At length I got it safely to shore, where we landed the freight, and securing the raft, ready for our return, we pushed on towards the south. We encamped at night by the side of the river, which we believed ran into the Thompson.

As we sat round our camp fire, I became better acquainted with Mr. Gaby and the very high opinion which he entertained of his own talents and powers. He informed me that he intended to settle in British Columbia, as he hoped to rise to the highest position if he did.

"I guess your Queen will be a lucky woman if she gets me as her subject to manage her affairs out here. I'm in no wise prejudiced. I'm a free and independent citizen of the greatest republic the world ever knew; but nevertheless I'm ready to give my services to any one who is able and willing to pay me properly."



CHAPTER XXI.

THE THOMPSON RIVER—OUR PARTIES RE-UNITE—HIPPOPHAGOUS
STORES—INDIAN REVENGE—WE BUILD A RAFT AND TWO CANOES
—THE RAPIDS, AND OUR DANGERS—INDIANS IN AMBUSH.

WE had reached the banks of the Thompson, and were contemplating the possibility of descending it on a raft, when Stalker arrived and informed us that he had met an Indian who told him that, though we might possibly

cut our way through the forest, we should find it a very arduous undertaking; that we might descend the Thompson by water, but that there were some fierce rapids on the way, into which, if we once plunged, we should inevitably be lost, and that we should in a much shorter time reach Cariboo if we went down the Frazer than by any other way. I agreed to his suggestion, though I still held to the opinion that one of the shortest roads from Red River to New Westminster will be found by the way we came and down the Thompson, and that with the aid of small steamers and ferry boats, and a gang of navies and lumberers, it might speedily be made practicable. Yet, as we wished to get to Cariboo, we followed the Indian's advice.

Some days passed before we all again met on the banks of the Frazer River. Trevor and his party had met with numerous adventures, the most serious of which was the loss of one of our horses, laden with numerous valuables. Three horses had fallen over a cliff into the river. Two, after great exertions, had regained the bank; but the third was swept down the stream and never seen again. Our provisions were growing short, and though game was occasionally shot, it was not in quantities sufficient to make amends for the amount we exhausted, and we were unwilling to go on short allowance—thereby lessening our strength and power of endurance and impeding our progress. We accordingly determined to go on till we found some place where there was sufficient pasturage for our horses to give them a chance of life, to kill and dry the flesh of some of them to replenish our stock of meat, and, with ample provisions for the voyage, to commence our descent of the Frazer.

The matter was earnestly discussed over our camp fire the evening of our re-assembling. We all knew

that the navigation of an unknown river on a raft is a most dangerous proceeding. If once a strong current gets hold of a raft, it is almost impossible for those on it to guide it properly. I therefore proposed that, besides a raft, we should form two dug-out canoes—that one should go ahead as pilot, and the other be attached to the raft to carry a rope on shore, so as to stop the raft when necessary. We were fortunate in soon finding an open, well-grassed valley suited for our object, where we might leave the horses which we did not require to kill. Of course, it was very likely that they would be taken possession of by Indians or bears. In every other respect there was no fear about their being able to take care of themselves during any ordinary winter. Stalker told us a story which shows that people can exist even during the most severe winter with very little shelter, if they have a moderate supply of food. The event occurred many years ago.

An officer of one of the fur trading companies of those days had received directions to establish a trading post on the banks of one of the rivers in that district. Either he or one of his brother officers had some time previously had to punish an Indian for some offence committed against the community. The man was hung; his tribe looked on, acknowledging the justice of his sentence, and took their departure without any expression of anger. The post was established, and as the natives in the neighbourhood were supposed to be friendly, it was only partly fortified. As soon as the house was built, a party of hunters was sent out to a spot four or five days' march off, known to be well stocked with beavers. One of them, a half-bred, Pierre Dorie by name, had his Indian wife and two small children with him, one three years old, the other only

four months. Huts were built; and while the trappers were out, this faithful squaw of Dorie took charge of them. While she was occupied in her household affairs, one evening soon after winter had commenced, expecting the return of her husband and his companions, one of the hunters staggered into her hut mortally wounded. He had barely time to tell her that her husband and the rest were murdered by Indians, and to advise her to fly, when he fell down dead.

With that courage and presence of mind which Indian women possess generally in so remarkable a degree, she prepared to escape with her children. Immediately hurrying out, she caught, with some difficulty, two horses, and, returning with them, packed up all the provisions the hut contained and some blankets and clothes. These she placed on one horse, and, mounting the other with her two infants, set out for the newly-built post, hoping to arrive in time to give notice of what had occurred, and put the officer in charge on his guard. She had accomplished two days of her journey without meeting with enemies, when, on the third, as she was pushing on as fast as the strength of her horses would allow, she espied in the distance a large body of Indians on horseback, galloping towards the fort. Her heart misgave her. She instantly dismounted, just in time to conceal herself and her horses in a copse ere the Indians passed by. Still fearing that they might be in the neighbourhood, she dared not light a fire or go in search of water. Early the next day she again set out, and late in the evening approached the spot where she expected to find the fort. It had disappeared,—a heap of ashes alone marking the place where it had stood. Still hoping to find some of the inmates alive, she concealed her children and the horses in a thick wood, and,

arming herself with an axe and knife, crept cautiously towards the spot. Everywhere, traces of blood met her view. Still she hoped that some one might be concealed near. She called over the names of those who had been left in the fort. No one replied. She waited. Again she called. The melancholy howl of the prairie wolf was the only reply. She drew a little nearer. By the light of smouldering timbers, which a puff of wind just then fanned into a flame, she saw a band of those voracious creatures engaged in a banquet on the remains of her friends. A new terror seized her. They might attack her infants, whom she had left sleeping on the ground. Hurrying back, her heart sinking with dread, she was just in time to drive several away who were approaching the spot. The next morning she set out for a range of hills in the neighbourhood, bordering a river which falls into the Columbia. Here she proposed to remain during the winter.

After looking about on all sides, she selected as her abode for the winter a rocky recess in the hills, near which a stream bubbled forth. She had in her possession a large buffalo robe and two deer skins. With these, aided by fir bark and cedar branches, she constructed a hut sufficiently large to afford shelter for herself and children. She soon, however—finding that her provisions would not last her during the winter—killed the two horses, and smoke-dried their flesh. Their skins further improved her tenement. In this cheerless and wretched abode, the poor widow with her infants spent the livelong winter, not even seeing at a distance a human being passing by. Finding, towards the end of March, that her stock of provisions was growing short, she packed up the remainder, and, with as much covering as she could carry in addition to her youngest child

on her back, set out, holding the other by the hand, towards a spot on the Columbia river, by which she knew the Company's canoes would certainly pass. Fortunately, she met a tribe of friendly Indians, who treated her and her children with the greatest kindness, and after residing with them for some weeks, she saw the looked-for trading canoes arrive, and was ultimately restored to her friends.

We had plenty to occupy us in the construction of our raft and two canoes. The raft was to be just large enough to carry six men and Ready. Each canoe was to be capable of carrying two men, though the ordinary crew was to consist only of one man. Not one of us had ever before made a dug-out, and as the huge trunks of two trees which we had felled for the purpose lay prostrate before us, the undertaking seemed almost hopeless. "Nothing try, nothing have," cried Trevor, seizing an axe and chopping away at the branches. We next cut the first tree into the proposed length, and smoothed off the upper part for the gunwale. On their flat surface I marked off the shape, as I used to do when cutting out a vessel as a boy.

"Let us give her good floors and all the beam we can, and she will be stiff," said Trevor.

This we did; and as we proceeded with our work, we were well satisfied with it, and found that we could get on far more expeditiously than at first. While Trevor and I worked away on the canoes, the other men were progressing with the raft, and preparing the other log for our finishing. The first canoe was completed and launched with due ceremony under the name of the *Hops*. The next was called the *Beauty*. They both swam pretty well, but the sides being rather thick they were deeper in the water than was desirable.

Still, as they were much more manageable than a raft could be, I regretted that we had not time to build more canoes large enough to carry all the party, and our provisions and goods. We made several additional paddles, as also a supply of poles, which were loaded on to the raft. The last thing I thought of was a mast and sail for the raft, as, under many circumstances, it might enable us to guide the raft, especially if the wind was against us, and a rapid near at hand.

One lovely bright morning we cast off from the shore, and commenced our perilous undertaking. Quick-ear had been down the river in his youth, but it was so long ago that he had forgotten the distances. All he could say was, that there were several dangerous rapids; but he could not say where they occurred. Stalker went first, and acted as pilot, and Garoupe had charge of the tender. The raft was tolerably heavily laden, and required careful handling. Each man on the raft had a pole as well as a paddle, to be used as circumstances required. I acted as captain, for I certainly knew as much about the navigation as any one on board, and it was necessary that some one should be in command. I also steered with a long oar fixed on a triangle at one end of the raft, while the rest of the party were arranged with paddles on either side. In the centre we placed the stores, and close to them Ready generally took his post, while the stores and provisions were placed round it. The scenery was grand—much as I have before described it—lofty, rugged mountains, their summits covered with snow, sometimes near, sometimes in the far distance; steep precipices, rugged wild rocks, and forests of trees of every size, with many fallen ones, some just uprooted, others soft from decay; here and there green glades, marshes,

and other open spaces ; while, by the sides of the rivers, and frequently in mid current, huge water-worn boulders, which it was often no easy matter, in our downward course, to avoid.

For several days the weather was fine, and we went on smoothly enough—camping at night on convenient spots. To prevent accidents, we unloaded our raft, placed the goods in the centre of the camp, and drew up our canoes. On the fourth night of our voyage, Ready, who was our most vigilant watcher, suddenly broke into a loud bark, and started towards a copse close to us. I sprang to my feet ; so did Peter, who said that he saw a dark form moving among the trees. Whether it was a bear or a human being he could not tell. Whatever it was, it made its escape before Ready could come up with it, and I called him back lest he should be injured if allowed to be without support. Of course, the whole camp was aroused. Two scouts crept out cautiously, but could discover nothing, and the opinion was, that some small animal had aroused Ready and that Peter's imagination had conjured up the figure in the wood. I thought it better, however, to keep on watch during the remainder of the night. Ready was far from easy, and several times started up and uttered low growls and short shrill barks.

We embarked at the usual hour in the morning. In a short time Stalker came back and reported that the navigation was far more difficult than heretofore, though with caution we might get through. " Let's try it by all means," was the cry. We were getting bold, and thought that we could do anything with our raft. Stalker, accordingly, again went on ahead, and we poled and paddled towards an opening among the rocks which he pointed out. Suddenly our poles lost bottom,

and we found the raft whirled on at a rate which prevented me from guiding it in the way I had hitherto done. The paddles were almost useless. All we could do was to let the raft drive on, and to try and avoid the dangers as they appeared. We had passed several rocks, against which, if we had touched them, the raft might easily have been knocked to pieces, when a huge rock appeared before us, round which the water rushed with the force of a mill stream.

In vain Garoupe tried to tow us off from it—it was too late to attempt to carry a rope to the opposite shore—in vain all hands paddled to keep it clear. The raft struck, and remained caught by the rocks, the water immediately swelling up and threatening to sweep off the goods on it. Garoupe, instantly telling Swiftfoot to jump in, paddled off with a rope to the opposite shore. In the meantime, I saw that the water was shallow between the raft and the shore near which we were jammed. Accordingly, I told Quick-ear to try it, which he did, and finding it shallow, began at once to carry the goods on shore. This appearing the best thing to be done, Trevor, I, and Peter set about helping him. We had already landed several things, and Trevor and Peter were with Gaby on the raft, when, suddenly, from its being so much lightened, the current lifted it up, and away it went floating off the rock and down the stream. Garoupe and Swiftfoot made an attempt to stop it with the rope, but that snapped, and the raft was hurried on. I ran along the bank, which was here tolerably smooth. I saw Trevor sounding with his pole, and the next moment he and his two companions leaped overboard, and attempted to drag the raft towards the shore. Utterly hopeless was the attempt. It was forced from their grasp. I saw Gaby frantically pull-

ing at it; but his foot slipped, and he let go his hold. The other two leaped on it, and on it floated, while he with difficulty gained a pointed rock in the middle of the stream, where he sat, by no means like "Patience on a monument smiling at Grief," but frantically calling out for the canoe to come to his rescue.

While this was taking place, Garoupe and Swiftfoot had embarked in the canoe, and were going in pursuit of the raft; but the channel they took carried them at a distance from poor Gaby—besides which, he would have upset the canoe had he attempted to get into it. Quick-ear and I ran on, he taking the lead, over the rocky ground, with a rope which he had brought on shore, hoping to render assistance to our companions on the raft. Gaby, believing himself abandoned, shouted more frantically than ever. I could only urge him to stick fast till we could return to his assistance; and the rocks soon hid him from sight. Once more, after an arduous run over rough boulders, among which I expected every instant to fall and break my legs, if not my neck, I again caught sight of the raft sticking fast between two rocks. Ready had, as he always did, kept close to my heels whenever he saw that there was work to be done, and when I put the end of the rope Quick-ear had brought into his mouth, he at once comprehended that he was to swim off with it to Peter, to whom I shouted to call him. Ready accomplished his task, and we now thought that, at all events, we should be able to land the remainder of the goods. Once again Quick-ear and I waded off with the assistance of the rope; though the water was deeper and the current stronger than I fancied, with a heavy load on my shoulder; just, however, as we got on the raft it swung round, and the cleat to which the rope was fastened gave way.

The raft floated off into deep water, and was carried quickly towards some swifter rapids than we had just passed. Though we might escape with our lives, still, the greater part of our provisions would be destroyed, and without them we could not hope to prosecute our voyage round to Cariboo. Just at that critical moment the canoes reached us. Stalker and Garoupe towed with all their might. We all paddled, and, at length, finding bottom with our poles, forced the raft into a counter eddy, and then, without much trouble, reached the shore.

Our difficulties had now, however, only just begun. We had to unload the raft, and to transport all our goods by land to the foot of the rapid. However, with larger canoes, Stalker was of opinion that we should have had no difficulty in getting down the rapid. Each package was done up so as to weigh as much as a man could carry over rough ground. On examination, it was found that the bank opposite to that on which we had hitherto camped was the easiest for the portage. With much caution, and the aid of all our ropes, we therefore towed our raft across the river, and began unloading. Stalker, meantime, paddled up the stream to relieve poor Gaby from his unpleasant position. The rest of us were so busily occupied that we scarcely noted how time sped. I had made one trip to the end of the portage, and was lifting up another load, when Gaby's voice saluted my ears. His clothes, still wet, clung to his thin body, and his countenance wore a most lugubrious expression.

"I guess, friend, we are in a pretty fix," he observed.

He then told me that while he had been on the rock he saw three Indians in their war-paint and feathers, who had emerged from the wood and stood eyeing him

as he sat on the rock ; that soon they were joined by others, who drew their bows with arrows pointed at him ; that one shot, but the arrow fell short, and that they shook their heads as if of opinion that they could not reach him. They then disappeared into the depths of the forest. This information, coupled with what Peter had asserted he had seen the previous night, made us fear that we were watched by Indians, who would very likely fall on us, if they found us unprepared to receive them. We considered ourselves, therefore, fortunate in having crossed the river so that they could not reach us unless they had canoes, and we had seen none on our way down. It was very heavy work carrying our property along the portage. When Stalker undertook to carry the raft down the rapid Gaby volunteered to accompany him. All we could do was to bring up the goods we had at first landed to a camp near the raft. We formed it among rocks which would afford us good shelter on either side should we be attacked by Indians. However, as the tribes in that direction are generally friendly to the white men, we did not expect to be attacked by a large body, though we thought it very possible that a few individuals might have formed a plan to cut us off and possess themselves of our property. So we kept a sharp look out, and the possibility of being attacked added greatly to our difficulties.



CHAPTER XXII.

WE SEND OUT SCOUTS—WE PASS THE RAPIDS—SWIFTFOOT RETURNS ALONE—INDIANS SURROUND US—A WAR PARTY BURN OUR VACATED CAMP—QUICK-EAR, PURSUED BY INDIANS, ARRIVES—WE BUILD MORE CANOES—REACH FORT ST. GEORGE.

THE next morning, Swiftfoot and Quick-ear went out as scouts to ascertain if any enemies were in the neigh-

bourhood; and soon they returned with the report that they could find no traces of enemies.

Having made four trips during the morning with our goods, I proposed placing a portion of them on the raft and accompanying Stalker on it down the rapid. One of the canoes we hauled up on the raft. Garoupe took charge of the other. Stalker—who had surveyed the passage—Habakkuk, and I, navigated the raft. The rest of the party, under Trevor, made the best of their way along the portage. We cast off, and away we went whirling down the rapid. Sometimes the raft rocked so much that we could scarcely keep our feet. Now we were hurried towards a rock, as if about to be dashed on it, when a stroke from Stalker's pole would drive us off again. It was exceedingly exciting, though somewhat trying to the nerves. The water boiled, and bubbled, and hissed, and rocked us up and down. Then, again, the raft would glide into water rapid as ever, but perfectly smooth, only an instant afterwards to be tossed about as if in a whirlpool. I have seldom felt more happy than when I found that we were safely through and in a wide reach of the river. We poled the raft to shore, and securing it, began at once to reload it with all the goods which had arrived.

While thus occupied, waiting for the remainder of our party, we distinctly saw several Indians peering at us from among the trees on the opposite side of the river. When they saw that we stopped in our labours and looked towards them they disappeared. This made us somewhat anxious, for it was certain that they could not be well-disposed towards white men, or they would have come out and had some communication with us. They must have seen, however, that we were not a party to be trifled with, and that if they

meditated attempting to get possession of our property, they would have to pay dearly for it. As we had still three or four hours of daylight, instead of stopping to dine as soon as the rest of our party arrived, we all embarked and continued our course. The river, however, here expanded into almost a lakelike width, and the current was less rapid than usual, while the wind was adverse, and we made much less progress than we expected. We paddled on as long as we could, wishing to find a convenient camping place on the left bank. After all, we were compelled to land on the right bank, on which we had seen the Indians. We had very little fear of them, however, though it compelled us to keep a more careful watch than we should otherwise have done.

As soon as our camp was formed and we had taken a hearty meal, of which we all stood greatly in need, we sent out Swiftfoot and Quick-ear as scouts, to ascertain if any Indians were in the neighbourhood. The night drew on. The rest of the party lay down to rest with their arms by their sides. However, with Ready, I walked round and round the camp, for our scouts were so long absent that I became anxious about their safety. At length, my ears caught the sound of footsteps approaching at a rapid rate. Ready stopped, with his nose out, and then advanced a few steps, but did not bark. By this, I guessed that it was one of our scouts coming back. I was not mistaken; and I had good reason to be thankful that I had sent him out. He told me that he had come upon a large body of Indians seated round their fires and holding a council of war; that, as far as he could understand their dialect, they proposed attacking us when they could catch us unprepared, and seemed very much to regret that they had not

done so when we were passing down the rapids in the morning. He gathered, moreover, from their eagerness to attack us forthwith and from some other remarks they made, that the navigation of the river for a considerable distance below where we were was very easy. They appeared to be awaiting the arrival of another party equally numerous as themselves. Swiftfoot expressed his fears that Quick-ear had fallen into the hands of the party, when, after waiting some time, he did not appear at the camp.

At length, I aroused my companions, and told them what I had heard. Trevor proposed fortifying the camp and waiting to receive the enemy. Stalker suggested that we should embark at once and continue our voyage, and that Garoupe and Swiftfoot should wait in the canoe to bring on Quick-ear if he should appear.

"But that will seem like running away from the enemy," urged Trevor, like a stout John Bull as he was.

"I kalkilate the wisest thing is to do what is most profitable, and I don't see much profit in stopping to fight a gang of red varmints," observed Habakkuk.

I agreed with Stalker, and at length Trevor gave way, and we loaded the raft as rapidly as we could lift the goods on board. Garoupe consented to remain for Quick-ear, and we hoped to navigate the raft without his aid.

We embarked with as little noise as possible, and now shoving off, followed Stalker down the stream. I experienced a peculiarly solemn and awful feeling as we glided down that dark unknown stream, with the primeval forest rising up on either side, and still more so when we entered a mountainous region where the rocks towered up some twelve or fifteen hundred feet

directly above our heads. We feared from the appearance of the river that we might be approaching some rapid. We accordingly moored the raft to a rock, while Stalker paddled on ahead to explore. After waiting for some time, we heard his voice shouting to us to come on. As we were casting off the rope the sound of a paddle was heard up the stream, and we accordingly kept on. In a short time Swiftfoot came alongside. He had waited under the bank, a little lower down than our camp. Suddenly, loud and fearful shrieks rent the air, and a large body of savages burst into our camp. It was certainly better for us not to have been there, and better for them too, for, although we might have killed a number of them, yet that would have been a poor satisfaction if they had killed one of us. They must have been woefully disappointed when they found that the birds they expected to catch had flown. We had now too much reason to fear that Quick-ear had fallen into the hands of the savages. Poor fellow! we could not go back to his assistance, though I must say I felt ashamed of deserting him without further search.

Morning at last broke, and we were still progressing along a deep, rapid, and clear stream, free from rocks or shallows. We hoped that by this time we had got far beyond the reach of the enemy. As I had looked up at the stars in the clear night, I had, however, observed that the river made several sharp bends, and thus I knew that we had not really made good any great distance through the country. As the sun rose there was a general cry for breakfast, and we accordingly put into a little bay with a small extent of grassy ground—a pleasant nook in the bush. We lit our fires, and breakfasted sumptuously on dried horse-flesh, converted into a capital stew, with the aid of

some cloves, garlic, and pepper and salt, by allowing the steaks to simmer over a slow fire after being first briskly boiled in our frying-pans in just enough water to cover the meat. We also had hot dampers and plenty of strong tea, guiltless, however, of milk, which was a luxury we had not indulged in for many a long month.

Though the situation of the spot tempted us to remain some hours, that we might get some animals to stock our larder, yet, lest the hostile Indians should overtake us, we deemed it more prudent to continue our voyage. We had just packed up our cooking things and were stepping on board, when we heard a shout close to us, and the next instant Quick-ear burst through the wood and sprang on board the raft, crying out that the enemy were close upon him. We lost no time, therefore, in shoving off; and, as we were paddling down the river, we saw the spot we had just left filled with savage and yelling warriors. Quick-ear had had a long and desperate run, and it was some time before he could speak. When he recovered, he told us that he had found his way back to the camp just after it had been occupied by the savages, and guessing that we had gone down the river, he set off by an Indian track which he thought would lead to it at some point we were likely to pass. He had got some distance, when he found that the enemy were following, probably with the intention of cutting us off. This made him still further increase his speed. He had been seen by them a mile or two before he reached us, and had to run for his life. Had he been a minute later, he would have missed us altogether.

For several days we went on promisingly, when one day Stalker came paddling back to warn us that we

were approaching a fierce rapid. We accordingly urged the raft to the shore, and landing our goods, prepared for a long portage. Still, we proposed attempting to carry down the raft. Stalker, Trevor, and I, in attempting to shoot one of the worst rapids, were very nearly lost. We had just time to spring into the canoes, which were on the top of it, when the raft was dashed to pieces. With considerable difficulty we paddled the canoes through, and had they been of birch-bark instead of dug-outs, they must inevitably have shared the fate of the raft. Had our provisions been on the latter, we might eventually have lost our lives. When, at length, we reached the foot of the rapid, we determined to do what it would have been wise in us had we done at first—that is, built canoes to convey the whole party and our goods. We here found some fine trees for the purpose, and, assisted by our former experience, in the course of a few days we had built two large canoes. As we had no saw, we had to chip our boards to form gunwales to them. Swiftfoot and Quick-ear sewed these on very neatly, so that the capacity of the canoes was very greatly increased. The sides of the two smaller canoes being raised in the same way, and then joined together, were also capable of carrying a considerable cargo.

Our voyage was much longer than we had expected; we ate up nearly all our provisions, expended the greater part of our powder, tobacco, and tea,—the great essentials in the bush,—and wore out our clothes and our patience. At length, however, we reached Fort George, a fort of the Hudson's Bay Company, where we received that attention and hospitality for which its officers are so justly famed. After quitting Fort St. George we continued the descent of the Frazer to the

mouth of the Quesnelle River, where a town has sprung up. Landing here, and leaving our canoes in store, we prepared to tramp it across country to Richfield, the capital of the Cariboo district. We overtook parties of the wildest set of fellows it has ever been my lot to encounter, people of all nations, and tongues, and colours.

The land in the district of Fort George is admirably adapted for agriculture, as all the European cereals, together with potatoes, turnips, carrots, and other esculent vegetables, arrive at full maturity. The white population consists chiefly of old servants of the Hudson's Bay Company, and emigrants from the Highlands of Scotland. Indeed, the whole of this "Prairie Region," as it is called, on account of the immense plains devoid almost of timber, and requiring, in consequence, no outlay for clearing, would no doubt before long be under the plough, if the Home Government would open up roads through the district. Barley and oats ripen even at Fort Norman, at a latitude of 65°.



CHAPTER XXIII.

**RICHFIELD, THE CAPITAL OF CARIBOO—THE DIGGINGS—HABAKKUK
SETS UP A STORE—ENGAGES PETER FOR A TIME—ARRIVE AT
VICTORIA—LORD MILTON AND DR. CHEADLE.**

THE city of Richfield has been built, and furnished, and supplied with provisions and liquors at the expense of a large amount of animal life; for the sides of the road were literally strewed with the bodies and bones of the animals which had died on the way. We put up at an inn where the object seemed to be to give us the worst possible food and accommodation at the greatest possible charge. Already, Richfield boasts of

numerous hotels, and stores, and shops of every description, and dwelling-houses of a somewhat rough character. Coin is scarce, but gold is plentiful; so people carry gold dust about in little bags, and weigh out what they require for payment of goods received. I had fancied that gold-digging was rather clean and pleasant work, and that all a man had to do was to walk about for a few hours in the day with a geologist's hammer to fill his wallet with nuggets. My visit to Cariboo dispelled this notion. There are possibly harder and more dirty employments; but gold-digging is a very dirty and hard one. In the first place, shafts have to be dug forty or fifty feet deep to the lodes, where the pay dirt is found. In galleries leading from these shafts the earth is dug out and put into baskets, which are hoisted out by a windlass and turned into large troughs, through which a stream of water is made to pass, with a succession of sieves, through which the gold dust falls. This is one of the most simple and easy of the processes employed. Water has often to be brought from great distances; deep trenches have to be dug, and the diggers have to work up to their middle in icy-cold water, with their heads exposed to the hot sun, down in deep holes in the beds of streams, or by the sides of streams, day after day, sometimes finding nothing, at other times only enough to enable them to procure food and lodging for the time. Others, again, have been fortunate, and have worked claims from which they have extracted many thousand pounds worth of gold in a few weeks. The latter have been mostly men who have had their wits about them, and who have purchased claims which they had good reason to believe would pay.

Such was the case with our friend Habakkuk Gaby. The day after our arrival, we saw him wheeling a

barrow about, up and down hill, stocked with a variety of small wares such as he well knew miners would value. Whether he sold or not, he stopped and had a talk with all he met, picking up a little bit of information from one and a little bit from another. His former experience in California enabled him to ask questions likely to procure what he required. For several days he patiently continued at this occupation. At last, one evening, Trevor and I received a visit from him.

He told us that he had bought a claim which he guessed would pay; that he had engaged Stalker and the rest of our men for the summer; and asked if I would allow Peter to remain with him, promising to make the lad's fortune, and to bring him down safely with him to Victoria at the end of the season, in time for him to leave the country with us. As Peter expressed a strong wish to remain and try his fortune at gold-digging, I did not oppose him; indeed, I could manage to do without the lad, and I wished him to employ himself in whatever was most likely to conduce to his success in life. Trevor and I tried our hands at gold-digging for a fortnight, at the end of which time we had had quite enough of it. After paying the owners of the claim the rent agreed on, we pocketed some few pounds apiece; but we were nearly knocked up with the hard work.

Before leaving Richfield, we paid a visit to Mr. Gaby. We found him in a most flourishing condition. At one end of his claim was a store, of rough materials. On the front was an imposing board with "Gaby and Co." painted in large letters on it, and underneath, "Everything sold here." He welcomed us warmly, and pressed us to come in and liquor.

"I don't much like this work," he said; "but I'll make it pay while I am at it. We shall meet again before many months are over."

We found Peter serving in the store. He said that he took his turn with another lad at mining, and liked his occupation. His master treated him well. He got two dollars a day and everything found him, so that he did very well.

The next day we bade farewell to Cariboo, and tramped it on foot four days to the town of Quesnelle, on the banks of the Frazer. Here we found a steamboat going down the Frazer to a place called Cedar Creek, where the navigation of the river becomes impracticable for four hundred miles to the town of Yale, from which place to New Westminster and Victoria steamers run constantly up and down the Frazer.

By far the most uncomfortable part of our journey was that performed in the stage between Cedar Creek and Yale. Our feet were cribbed, cramped, and confined, and we had just cause to apprehend a capsizing over the terrific precipices along which part of the road lay, into the foaming waters of the Frazer.

Victoria is already a wonderful place, considering when it had its beginning—full of hotels, large stores, churches, dwelling-houses, and places of amusement, including a theatre, where stars of the first magnitude occasionally shine forth. We travelled all over the province of British Columbia and through Vancouver Island; made a visit to Nassaimo, the Newcastle of the North Pacific, and became more than ever convinced that what is chiefly required to place those colonies among the most flourishing and valuable of the possessions of Great Britain is the opening up of a road and the erection of

post-houses along the line of country we had travelled from Lake Superior, *via* the Red River settlement and the Fertile Belts.

Of course, we gained great credit for the successful accomplishment of our voyage down the Frazer; but I consider that we were far eclipsed by the journey performed by Lord Milton and Dr. Cheadle across the Rocky Mountains, by Jasper House and the Bête Jaune Cache down the Thompson and Kamloops. We had the pleasure of meeting at Victoria a very intelligent gentleman, who accompanied them from Edmonton; and from him we learned the particulars of their journey. The party consisted of himself, Lord Milton, Dr. Cheadle, and an Indian hunter from the Assiniboine River, with his squaw and their son, a big strong boy. They had also several horses and a fair amount of provisions and stores.

"Ah, sir, it was very fortunate for those young men that they had me with them, or they would inevitably have perished. The countess would have had to mourn her son and his friend, the gallant Cheadle," he observed, as he was introduced to us as the companion of those persevering travellers. "Yes, sir, I say it, fearless of contradiction, had it not been for my courage and perseverance they would never have accomplished the journey. I saw that, when I offered to accompany them; and if they did not know their true interest, I did. Why, that Assiniboine fellow would have murdered them to a certainty, but I kept him in awe by my eye—he was afraid of me, if he did not love me. Lord Milton is brave, but he wants that discretion and judgment which I possess; while Dr. Cheadle is really a fine fellow, and would have made a capital

backwoodsman. We had good horses ; and as I am a judge of horse-flesh, I have a right to say so, and we got on very well till we began to cross the rivers. Some of the streams were fearfully rapid, and it was very evident that my companions were scarcely up to their work. I used, generally, to plunge in with my horse, and, leading the way, call them to follow. This they did, and I was always ready on the top of the banks to help them out. We had frequently to construct rafts, when I invariably set to work to cut down the trees and to carry them to the river's brink. Sometimes, when I could not carry a log by myself, I had to call on one of them to help me ; but I did so only in the last extremity. You see, Lord Milton was a delicately-nurtured young man, and I wished to save him as much as I could. I do not doubt that if he writes a book he will bear witness to the truth of my assertions. The Assiniboine was of a good deal of use, considering that he had only one hand, and his wife and boy were active too ; but they could not possibly have got on without me. On one occasion, while I was asleep (or it would not have happened), the forest caught fire. I jumped up, and with a thick stick I always carried, so effectually attacked the flames that I put the fire out and saved the horses and our property.

“ On another occasion, when all the rest of the party had gone out hunting, and, being disabled, I had remained in charge of the camp, I saw a huge bear approaching. I had no gun ; but, sallying out with my stick, I put it to flight, and saved the camp from being plundered, which it would inevitably have been, of our most valuable property.

“ Our first important raft adventure was in crossing

the Canoe River, a tributary of the Columbia. A raft had been constructed. We embarked on it. The current was very strong. I warned my companions. They were deaf to my cautions. I saw that they were not up to navigating a raft. Suddenly, our raft was whirled round in a rapid current, which bore us to seeming destruction. A huge pine tree lay with its branches recumbent on the water. I shouted to my friends to hold on; but it was of no use. Dr. Cheadle leaped on shore, followed by the Assiniboine and his boy. I sat firmly at my post; Lord Milton and Mrs. Assiniboine hung on to the branch of the tree, like Absalom, only it was with their hands instead of the hair of their heads. To stop the raft was impossible; but to guide it towards the shore was practicable. I sat, therefore, calmly waiting an opportunity of steering my eccentric-moving bark towards a wished-for haven. This, with the assistance, I must own it, of the Assiniboine, I was enabled shortly to do. Lord Milton and Mrs. Assiniboine were, meantime, very nearly carried away by the roaring flood. Dr. Cheadle and I, at the risk of our lives, hastened to their assistance; and I must do the young nobleman the justice to say that he refused to be helped till we had got the woman out of her perilous position. I look upon that as true gallantry; and I told him that I should consider it a pleasing duty to narrate the circumstance whenever I gave an account of our adventures. However, Dr. Cheadle, considering that he was in by far the most dangerous position, got him out at once, and, with the aid of my handkerchief, I helped out the dark-skinned lady.

"That was only one of the many fearful dangers we ran. As I before remarked, it was very much owing to

my forethought that things were not worse. I used to rouse the young men up every morning, or I do not know how long they would have indulged in their downy slumbers; not that they were very downy, by-the-bye, considering that spruce fir-tops formed the most luxurious bed we had for many a day. They were also improvident, and had a knack of leaving their things behind them, insomuch that, in spite of all I could do, we had only one small axe left with which to cut our way through a dense forest. We supplied ourselves with a second axe belonging to a dead Indian found in the woods. By-the-bye, my friends were very much puzzled to find that the said dead man had no head, and that it could not have been taken by a human being, as he would have carried off the poor man's property; or by a wild beast, as it would have upset the body, which was found in a sitting position. It was close to our camp; and the fact was, that I had, not five minutes before, found the body, and lifted the head, which had fallen to the ground, with the end of a stick, and hid it in a bush hard by. Having crossed the mountains and found that we could not push overland to Cariboo, we turned our faces northward, to proceed down the Thompson River to Kamloops.

"None of our party were skilful boatmen. I do not myself profess to have any extensive knowledge of navigation; so my young friends would not venture to go down the Frazer in canoes, which, in my opinion, they might have done with ease. They chose to stick to terra firma, and, in consequence, they very nearly stuck fast. First, they lost one of their horses, laden with numerous valuables—nearly all their tobacco and tea and sugar; and the other poor beasts were so com-

pletely knocked up that it was difficult to drive them. Now they went one way, then another; now they tumbled down precipices or got jammed between trunks of trees; then they fell into the river and began swimming away, and the Assiniboine had to plunge in and fish them out. This continued week after week. We were like babes in the wood, lost in that fearful forest, cutting our way through it; often making good three or four miles in the day, our provisions running shorter and shorter, till we were reduced to live one day on a skunk, a creature I thought no human being could have eaten. I own that I could not. Sometimes precipices faced us, and sometimes steep hills, which it took us hours to get round or climb up. At last we had to kill a horse, my little pet Blackie, which, owing to my careful and judicious driving, was in better condition than any other of the lot. The young men had expended nearly all their powder; and, at the best of times, rarely killed more than a few birds in the course of the day. We found horse-flesh tolerably palatable; but, by the time we had begun to eat Blackie, we were not very particular. However, he was only the first horse we ate—we had to kill another before long—and it seemed probable that we should have to eat up our whole stud before we could reach Kamloops. Several times we discussed the question as to whether we should kill all our horses and tramp through on foot, or build rafts and descend the river. I urged my young friends to persevere. They took my advice, with happy results, for, in a short time, we entered an open country, and met some natives, not handsome, but kind-hearted people. They knew of Kamloops; they could guide us there; and did so. We were hospitably received.

"Our troubles were over; but I must say that I hope I may never spend another eleven weeks such as we went through since we started on our journey over the mountains. I entertained a different opinion of the Assiniboine to that held by my companions, and I believe that had it not been that I kept my eye on the man he would quietly have murdered us all; but he was afraid of me—that is the fact. He behaved bravely on one occasion, certainly, when he plunged into a river and dragged out our horse, Bucephalus, that, with another, Gisquakarn, had fallen in. The latter was swept away with our stock of tea and tobacco, salt and clothes, and several important documents belonging to me. Had my friends taken my advice, they would have divided these articles among the various animals. Possibly they will do so another time. Lord Milton and Dr. Cheadle talked of giving an account of their adventures to the world. If they do, unless their memories altogether fail them, they will corroborate all I have said."

The fine island of which Victoria is the rising capital, with a population of some seven or eight thousand inhabitants, came into possession by the British Oregon treaty, which determined the boundary between British North America and the United States. Vancouver Island is by far the longest on the west coast of America; and the coast-line is broken into fine natural harbours, which will afford protection to ships in all weathers. Coal of excellent quality is found at Nanaimo, and copper and iron ores: the latter, found nowhere else on the North Pacific coast, are plentiful. Fish of the most valuable kinds, including the viviparous species, are abundant; as are also the elk, deer, grouse, snipe, &c.,

by way of game; and for fur-bearing creatures, the beaver, the racoon, and land-otter, are the chief wild animals. Indeed, considering all its natural advantages, and its vicinity to the gold-fields of British Columbia, Vancouver Island must soon take a prominent place among the colonies of Great Britain.

Queen Charlotte Sound, which separates Vancouver Island from the main-land, is scarcely ten miles wide in some places, and the Strait of Juan de Fuca, which waters its shores as well as those of the territory of Washington in the United States, is not more than eighteen miles wide. The island itself is 275 miles long, of an average breadth of 75 miles, containing an area of 16,000 square miles, with a population of 20,000, of which above one-half are Red Indians.



CHAPTER XXIV.

VOYAGE TO SAN FRANCISCO—THE CITY AND DIGGINGS—WE BOOK
OUR PASSAGE FOR HONOLULU—MARCUS WARNS ME OF DANGER
AND THE IDEA IS ABANDONED—WE RETURN TO ENGLAND BY
NEW YORK—MARCUS SAILS FOR LIBERIA, AND WE SPENT
CHRISTMAS WITH AUNT BECKY.

I SCARCELY know why, but all of a sudden Trevor was seized with a strong desire to visit San Francisco; and as there is steam communication between that city and Victoria, there was no difficulty in the way to prevent its being gratified. We had fixed the day for

leaving Victoria, and were expecting Peter's return to my service, when Mr. Habakkuk Gaby walked into the room. He was wonderfully improved for the better since we parted at Cariboo, as far as dress was concerned; indeed, his costume was an indication of his very flourishing condition.

"Well, I've brought back Peter to you; and I kalkilate the lad's worth a hundred good dollars more than he was when you left him with me," he observed, after the usual salutations were over.

I hoped that he had been successful in his speculations.

"Yas, I guess I have," he answered, with a knowing wink; "I've had, too, enough of gold-digging, and I'm thinking of offering my services to the governor of one of these states as private secretary, or colonial secretary—I'm in no ways particular,—just to help him to put things to rights. I know how they ought to be—and that's not as they now are. If my offers are not accepted I shall go on to Californy and see what's to be done there; but I guess there are too many full-blooded Yankees there for the place to suit me."

Mr. Gaby, finding that the Governor of Victoria did not place the same estimate on his talents that he himself entertained, quitted the province in disgust, and was one of our fellow-passengers to San Francisco, the Queen of the Pacific, of which it is enough to say that the harbour is a magnificent one, as soon as the Golden Gate—the name given to the mouth of the river—is passed; and that the city is huge, composed of buildings of all sizes, from the imposing stone or brick edifice to the humble shanty. The hotels are numerous, and the jewellers' shops, especially, are as handsome as any in

London or Paris, while the population is truly composed of the natives of all countries in the world. We visited Sacramento and the diggings. The gold at the latter is chiefly obtained by crushing quartz; and numerous companies, with powerful machinery, are engaged in the business.

Cortez discovered California in 1537; yet, acclimatized as the Spaniards then were to the heat of the tropics, so oppressive did he find the climate, that he named the country, *Caliente Fornalla*, "the fiery furnace." The Spaniards made no attempt to search for its mineral wealth; and till the middle of the last century, when California belonged to Mexico, and rumours reached Europe of its auriferous soil, its gold-fields were looked upon as fabulous. Some efforts were then made to discover the hidden treasure, but they all proved abortive, and the pearl fishery was looked upon as the only valuable product of "a sterile land of rocks and stunted bushes," as it is described in the earliest account of any value of the country and its inhabitants, the latter then "but a step above the brute creation." This account was written in German, by a Jesuit, after his return to his native country upon the suppression of his order by Pope Ganganelli, in July, 1773, and is full of curious information.

Still, the tradition of its yielding gold was never obliterated; but it was not till September, 1847, after its cession to the United States, that gold in any considerable quantity was discovered in California. The pioneers were a Captain Sutter and a Mr. Marshall, two free settlers, who at first attempted to keep the discovery a secret. It is between that period and the year 1850 that the following sketch of "Dangers of the

Diggings" must be placed, after which it became a sovereign State of the American Confederation, though murders and Lynch law prevailed even up to 1860.

I give the story in the words of Habakkuk Gaby—half trapper and half gold-digger, as we have seen him to be—as it is worth preserving, as a curious evidence of the rapid rise of San Francisco in the course of less than a dozen years from a state of almost perfect anarchy to such a height of civilization and luxury as already to be regarded by many as all but the second city in the United States.

"Well, Master Trevor," began Habakkuk one evening, as we were seated together, comfortably discussing our wine and cigars, "I'm no way partikler, but there is a place I've no wish to go to, though I guess that it ain't hotter nor worse than Californy was when I first got to it. Ay, long before I got there, I guessed what was to follow; for a full day's journey along the whole road was like a broker's shop—only the goods were all smashed and had nobody to look after them. First, there were pianees, fiddles, guitars, and other gim-cracks. Then, chests of drawers, bedsteads, and boxes. Next, women's fine clothes, bless them! and then bedding, pillows, and blankets. The useless first; then, step by step, one little comfort after 'tother. Then, sadder still, tents and cooking apparatus, skeletons of horses and oxen, broken-down waggons. Now and then, a grave; but, saddest of all, casks of biscuit and crackers, of flour and preserved meats, and whitened human bones!

"On, on! No time to bury the dead! Water, water! None to be had—not enough to cover the finger's tip to cool the parched tongue! Whole families sank by

the roadside and died of thirst. Perhaps one survived. It may be the father, whose thirst for gold had broken up a quiet home,—and all for greed had brought a fond wife and mother to perish on these arid plains—every vestige of vegetation dried up by the scorching sun—after seeing her little ones, one by one, droop and die away. Terrible such a fate! Welcome death! But death, in mockery, spares the thirsting wretch till madness supervenes, and suicide or murder ends what greed for gold began.

“No, Master Skipwith; ’tis only young and hale men, with no tie on earth to bind them, that should seek the diggings. Broken of heart, careless of the world, I’ve seen others who have left behind all they loved and were worth living for on the track to the gold-fields, labouring like machines, never smiling, seldom speaking, scarcely knowing why they thus toiled and laboured; now, all they had once loved on earth had gone. We could tell the nature of the country by the sorts of articles left on the road. Still worse, if anything, were the scenes which took place at the diggings. Rheumatism and fever brought many to the grave. The poor wretches lay in their tents or lean-tos, with no one to attend them—no one to speak to them—till death put an end to their sufferings, or sometimes madness seized them, and they would rush out attacking all they met, till they sank exhausted, or till they were knocked over by some of their companions, as if they had been wild beasts. Not content with having sickness for their foe, the diggers quarrelled among themselves. One party had diverted a stream from the claim of another. The latter demanded compensation, which was refused, on which they attacked the aggressors, killed several, and wounded

many others. I guess gold-hunting, in those days, was not the pleasantest of occupations," remarked Habakkuk, in conclusion.

"The Ingins, too, was troublesome in these parts, I've heard say," observed Stalker.

"I guess they was," answered Mr. Gaby. "Can't say, however, but what our people—that is, the whites—often brought it on themselves by shooting a red man without provocation; making them work against their will, beating them when they wouldn't, and carrying off their squaws. Flesh and blood, whether it's red or black, or white, don't like that sort of treatment.

"One morning, two men were found speared in one of the out-huts, of the camp, and everything in it carried off. Though we didn't know much of the men, who they were or where they'd come from, they were whites, and that made the diggers very exasperated with the murderers. An expedition was at once organized to follow and punish the red men. We had no lack of leaders. Two or three men who had spent all their lives on the prairies or in the backwoods, and were well accustomed to cope with Indians, and knew all their tricks and cunning ways, offered their services. One fine old fellow was chosen—a Scotchman, called Donald McDonald. I guess that in his country there are a good many of the same name, but I don't think many like him. He had lived all his life in these parts; and what made him come to Californy I don't know, except the love of adventure, for he had plenty of money. He stood six feet four in his stockings, with a head of hair of a bright carrot-red, which hung down all over his shoulders—a beard and moustache to match. His brow, full of wrinkles, alone showed his age; for his eyes were

bright and piercing, and his step as elastic as that of a young man. So as you seem pretty quiet with regard to the Ingins in these parts, I'll just tell you how they manage things in the south, where, somehow or other, the whites are pretty nearly always at war with them. We assembled at the hut of the murdered men, that we might take our departure from it. There were numbers of footprints about the hut, but there had been no struggle near it. The men had been surprised by the crafty Ingins while they were asleep, run through with spears, and afterwards stabbed. Everything in the hut had been carried off by the murderers, who took no pains to conceal their numbers, or the direction in which they had gone. There was a considerable number of them, and their track led towards the most mountainous and intricate path of the country, with numerous streams intervening. 'The varmints think by coming this way to baffle us ; but we'll soon let them know that a keen pair of eyes is following which has been accustomed for forty years or more to ferret them out, in spite of all their dodges,' remarked Donald. It was well for those who had to accompany the old man to have a fast pair of legs.

"We kept on at a rapid rate the greater part of the day, the footmarks becoming more and more indistinct, from the nature of the ground, till we arrived at a mountain stream. As the traces were now totally lost, loud murmurs rose among our party.

" 'The savages have done us—depend on that,' cried several of them.

" 'I ken they must be very clever savages, then,' observed Donald, not a little offended at the imputation thrown on his sagacity.

"Donald continued walking up and down the stream for some time, carefully looking out for marks on the opposite side, for he well knew that the Indians must here have entered the stream and gone up or down some distance and then landed. No long time had passed before he shouted to us to follow him, and crossing the stream we came upon a track which looked at first as if only one person had passed, but on further examination we perceived that the varmint had formed in Indian file and trod in each other's footsteps. We followed for some little distance, when the Ingins, little dreaming what sort of men would be after them, and despising the White Faces' knowledge of their customs, broke off again, and walked along in a body, taking no pains to conceal their movements. They even dropped some of the flour which they were carrying off, and did not stop to hide the particles left on the ground. It was now getting dark, so we had to camp in a hollow, where we could light our fires without the danger of being seen by the Redskins, taking care, however, to prevent them from blazing up.

"As soon as we had camped, Donald went back to the river and quickly returned with a fat buck he had killed, and which he had watched for as it went to the stream to drink. We couldn't sleep much for talking of the fight to come off next day, and for all the brave things we were going to do. By daybreak next morning we were on foot and closely following the trail of our enemies. In three or four hours we reached the place where they had camped, and Donald told us that the varmints had had a good supper on venison, and cakes made of the flour they had stolen, and that there

were about five-and-twenty warriors, all well armed with bows and arrows, and spears, and axes. We now pushed on more rapidly than ever, eager to be up with them. They were also marching quickly to get back to their camp, where they had left their squaws and pappooses. Our route lay over mountains and across valleys, with grand scenery on every side. Each mountain we climbed the footprints of the Ingins became more and more distinct, till it was clear that we were rapidly getting up with them. McDonald, like a good general, now sent out scouts to prevent our being taken by surprise. We were told to hold our tongues and to look to our arms. At length we reached the summit of a lofty ridge, below which lay a broad valley.

“‘They are there,’ whispered McDonald; ‘and if you all keep silence, obey my orders, and behave like true men, we shall bag a round dozen of them.’

“These Californian chaps were no way particular how they treated the Redskins. Going on a little further, we saw, far down below us in the valley, a few wreaths of smoke curling up into the blue sky. They came from the fires of the Ingins. The order was now given to form in single file. Silently and cautiously we proceeded towards the encampment. The slightest noise or want of care would alarm our enemies, and perhaps bring destruction on our own heads. I guess it weren’t quite pleasant altogether, for if they had found us out, the tables might have been turned, and they would have killed us instead of our killing them.

“We crept on till we got to a low ridge, when, peering through the thick bushes, we saw, about four hundred yards off, a large body of Ingins encamped, some forty

men or more, and twenty or thirty women. One old man, who seemed by his dress and position to be a chief, sat against a tree with a group of warriors collected round him, evidently giving an account of their adventures. The latter were in their war-paint, with feathers of different colours stuck in their hair, which was tied up in knots behind. They were as wild and fierce a set of fellows as I ever set eyes on. Yet Donald afterwards said that they were as arrant a set of cowards as are to be met with; but he certainly seemed to hold the Redskins at a cheap rate. Slowly we crept closer and closer. Fortunately the Ingins were so engaged with their speeches and boasting of their brave deeds in murdering two unhappy men in their sleep, that their usually quick ears did not hear us. At a most critical moment, however, one of our party kicked his foot against a loose stone, which rolled down the bank. Some of the Redskins started and looked up, but they were so engaged in their occupations, some in speech-making, and others in cooking, that, seeing nothing to alarm them, so thick were the bushes, they took no notice of what had occurred. We spread out in a line so as almost to surround them, and then crouching down, waited till all the party were collected together round their evening meal. At a signal from McDonald we were to commence operations. We waited for it in breathless suspense. With a startling effect our first volley sounded through the calm evening air. The Ingin warriors sprang to their feet; it was only to afford us a surer mark. On we sprang, and when within thirty yards, fired point-blank at the poor wretches. Five fell where they stood, shot through the head, several more staggered on mortally wounded; the rest, uttering

fearful yells, took to flight. When the smoke cleared off, we discovered that they had halted to see who were their assailants.

“‘On, on, boys!’ shouted Donald, discharging his pistol at the Redskin nearest to him and bringing him to the ground. Then flourishing his formidable axe, he dashed on after the flying wretches.

“Those who had been the worst wounded made their way to a stream, where, in spite of our approach, their faithful squaws joined them, and began to bathe their wounds in the cool water. They knew that, however bad a wound, if the inflammation can be kept down, a man’s life may be saved. Many a poor fellow has died on the battle-field for want of cold water. ‘Let none of you hurt the women,’ shouted Donald, who, rough as he looked, was humane and kind-hearted in his way, as well as brave. Some of our fellows were, however, no better than savages themselves. Before Donald could interfere they had brained four of the wounded men. One of the women tried to save her husband, but two of our party killing the man, hurled her with him into the stream. One of the Redskins, who, badly wounded, was trying to escape, dropped as if he had suddenly fallen dead. His pursuer was about to knock out his brains, when the Ingin sprang to his feet, and tried to seize the gun from his assailant’s hands. He would have succeeded had not one of our party come up with a loaded pistol and shot the Redskin through the head. Donald insisted that the poor women who had so bravely remained by their husbands should be allowed to stay by them near the stream, greatly to the disappointment of some of the Californians, who wanted to kill all they could reach.

Having collected all the articles which had been taken from the hut, including the flour, and as much venison as we could carry, we beat a retreat up the hills again. There was little fear of the party we had dispersed attacking us, but they would very likely collect their allies, and if we remained where we were, come down on us in overwhelming numbers. All the tribes in those parts have horses—mustangs they call them—so that they would have had no difficulty in collecting a large body of warriors in a short time, who, if they did not destroy us, would greatly harass us in our marches. Darkness compelled us to camp, and you may be sure we kept a sharp look-out all night, but the varmints had had enough of us, and allowed it to pass quietly.

"The Ingins followed us, however, the next day, though we took a different route to avoid them; but they soon found that we were led by a leader who knew what he was about, and that they were likely to come off second best if they attacked us. We got back safe to the diggings, and I was not sorry either. I am a man of peace, and I don't like fighting of any sort, much less such murderous work as we had been engaged in—such as shooting a dozen of our fellow-creatures at their supper. Those Ingin murderers deserved punishment; there's no doubt about that; but I did not fancy punishing them in that way."

Habakkuk gave us several other anecdotes which he had heard of the redoubtable Scot, Donald McDonald. Among others I remember one which amused us greatly.

Mr. McDonald was very thick with the Redskins at all times, for he had a dark-red wife, and some light-

red children, of whom he was very fond, and spent much of his time in the lodges of his wife's relations. Gambling was then, of course, one of their principal amusements, especially when visitors came in. One day an old chief, Slabface, went into his father-in-law's lodge, when he, with Donald and others, were soon engaged in gambling. Donald suddenly detected some trick or other, and rushing out into the open air, seizing his gun as he went, declared that he would play no more, and would be revenged on the rascal who had cheated him. Slabface followed, and asked him what he wanted. 'Satisfaction,' shouted Donald. 'You are a cheat, a rogue, and a liar, and you must fight me.'

"All in good time; but you are reputed to be a brave chief, and chiefs should not put themselves into a passion,' answered Slabface, quite coolly.

"I want none of your talk. I say again that you are a cheat and a liar!' exclaimed Donald, getting more and more angry. 'Will you fight me like a man, I ask?'

"A wise man wouldn't get into so great a passion about so small a thing,' said the Redskin, doing his utmost to exasperate Donald. 'If you wish it I'll fight to please you, though I think your proposal a foolish one. We will go into the wood and settle the matter.'

"Into the wood!' shouted Donald. 'By no means. Here as we stand, face to face, like men. Shall we fire together, or shall we draw for the first shot?'

"Why, now, indeed, I find that you are a far greater idiot than I supposed,' exclaimed Slabface, in a tone of scorn. 'Would any but a fool let his enemy point the muzzle of his gun at him, if he could help it?'

The Redmen are too wise to do such a thing. It is only foolish Pale Faces that fight thus.'

" 'Why how, in the name of sense, do you want to fight?' exclaimed Donald. 'I am inviting you to fight in the way all gentlemen fight in Scotland.'

" 'That shows that the gentlemen are fools,' answered Slabface. 'We will fight as all Indian warriors fight. We will go into the wood out there with our guns. You shall get behind one tree, and I will get behind another, and we will fire at each other as we can.'

" 'You are a coward, and afraid!' cried Donald, turning on his heel.

" 'I am not afraid, but I choose that way of fighting,' answered the chief, in the same calm tone as at first.

" 'Well, then, you shall have your own way,' exclaimed Donald, who would not have yielded in any other matter of far less importance.

" Slabface, who was a good shot, would too probably have killed our friend, had not a party of us, hearing what was taking place, hurried up and contrived to soothe his anger. Still, to make things sure, we carried off both his arms and those of Slabface."

Our friend Habakkuk's account gave us a pretty correct idea of the state of affairs in the early days of the Californian diggings. Matters improved in Australia, though they were bad enough there at first, and I am glad to say that they were conducted still better at Cariboo, and the other diggings of British Columbia.

Trevor and I had soon seen enough of the Golden City and its motley society; the chief of which, a mere money aristocracy, was not at all to our taste. There is a considerable amount of trade between San Francisco and

the Sandwich Islands, to which the diggers also often resort to recruit their health. Trevor, who had met Queen Emma at his High Church cousin's rectory, near Portsmouth, a year ago, was so enthusiastic in her praise, that we determined to return to England by the Panama route, spending some days at Honolulu on our way, and joining the steamer from New Zealand at Tahiti, which is in the direct line to Panama. We accordingly engaged a passage on board a brig, the *Banana*, bound on a trading voyage to those islands. As I was leaving the office of the agent to whom the *Banana* was consigned, I found a party of seamen lounging about in front of the door, as seamen of all nations are accustomed to do. These were a curiously mixed set; not only of all nations, but of all colours and tints. There were scarcely two alike. Among them were several negroes. I saw one of them, a fine sailor-like looking fellow, start as he saw me. I looked again, and had little doubt that the man I saw before me was the runaway slave, Marcus. Yet, though he eyed me as some of his companions were doing, not by another glance or sign did he seem to recognise me. He cast also the same indifferent look at Peter and Ready. I stopped for a moment for Trevor, who wished to obtain some additional information about the brig, so that I had time to examine the countenance of the black more narrowly. Every feature was that of the countenance of Marcus. So convinced was I of this, that I was on the point of going up to speak to him, when I reflected that he might possibly have some good reason for not recognising me, as it was not likely that he should have forgotten me and Peter, or the dog.

As I walked on slowly, after Trevor rejoined me, I

looked back and saw the black enter the ship-agent's office. Again, looking back after some time, I saw him following us at a distance, and evidently wishing that it should not be seen that he was doing so. He watched us into our hotel and then disappeared. Some stars of the first magnitude were performing at the opera house, and we went to hear them. On our return home, as we had nearly reached our hotel and were passing a dark archway, I felt my arm seized, and a voice whispered, "Stop!" I thought that I was about to be robbed, and expected to have a knife stuck into me—so did Trevor—when the voice said :—

"I am a friend. Listen. You do not know me; but I know you, and remember that I owe you a deep debt of gratitude never fully to be repaid. I am Marcus—once a slave. I must be brief. You are about to sail in the *Banana*. A number of rich miners, and others, whose health requires recruiting, are about to proceed in her to the Sandwich Islands. She has also, it is well-known, a rich freight. She has been marked for destruction. A band of desperate men on board a fast vessel purpose following her. Two of them will be sent to ship on board as part of the crew, so that she has not a chance of escape. Take my advice; do not go by her; sacrifice your passage money. Any loss will be better than venturing to sea in that craft. Farewell, Mr. Skipwith. I must not detain you, nor must I stay longer here. I owe you much; I am thankful that I have had again an opportunity of serving you. I have run a great risk to do so, and would willingly run a greater. We may never meet again; but believe that I earnestly desire your safety. I will not say I pray for it, for such a wretch as I am

cannot pray. If I could, my prayers would turn to curses. Farewell, farewell!"

The last words were said in a tone of deep feeling. Even before I could answer, he had disappeared. I said nothing to Trevor before we got to our hotel. I then told him all I had heard, describing how I had met Marcus, and the opinion I had formed of him.

Trevor looked serious for a few moments, and then he said—

"I must see Marcus myself. Though I do not know him personally, what you have just told me, and what Dick wrote about this man, interests me much, and if he is in trouble again, which I fear he must be, from the stealthy way in which he dodged you, let us try to get him out of it. Black-skin or white-skin, what does it matter? At bottom he is a noble fellow, and if you see nothing to object to the plan, he shall return with us to Old England; and when there, between us, we can manage to do something for him."

Of course, I could have no objection, so Trevor set off in search of the fugitive. San Francisco is not the pleasantest place in the world for such a search. There are a good many persons there who have been driven by their crimes out of society at home, and whose reckless way of living at the diggings casts a suspicion upon them, so that folks generally avoid that quarter of the city where they usually congregate, and where I had met Marcus but a few hours before.

I had been left to myself for more than three hours, and it was already getting dark, yet Trevor did not return. I therefore determined to go in search of him. I had just turned the corner of the street in which was the dark arch from which Marcus had emerged, when I saw

Trevor and the black approaching. Jack had succeeded in drawing Marcus away from a lawless set of rascals, who were pirates of the worst class, by whom the latter had recently been captured, and had had his life spared upon taking the usual oath to join the crew of his captors. He was closely watched by them, so that Trevor could not get near him till the shades of evening had fairly set in.

Jack and Marcus were not long in bringing me to their way of thinking, that overland would be our safer way of reaching England; so we determined to lose our passage money, and on Marcus's account more particularly, to take the easiest and quickest route to New York. Peter would not leave me, and is still a member of my household, dealing often in the marvellous, and frightening the maids in the kitchen with his narratives of shipwreck and crocodiles, of pirates and savages, and of blood and murder.

With our quitting San Francisco our perils and adventures came to an end, and we reached Liverpool in time to see Marcus on his way to Liberia, with letters of recommendation, before accepting dear Aunt Becky's invitation to spend Christmas at Merton Lodge, and to spread out before her the trophies I had promised at starting, among which her drawing-room exhibits, by way of hearth-rugs, two panther skins, and, in large glazed cases, a lot of stuffed birds and reptiles, including a rattlesnake and a boa-constrictor.

I need not say that Ready is a great favourite with all the household, and that with true canine sagacity he knows how to make the most of his popularity. He seems to imply by his manner that the stuffed trophies would scarcely have been where they are but

for him, and his bright eyes express as plainly as tongue
can do

Quorum pars magna fui,

whenever Trevor and I have to narrate, for dear aunt's
repeated gratification, how the living creatures them-
selves were captured and where they ran wild.

THE END.

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